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N.B. Albanian place names, like common nouns, have both a definite and an indefinite form, which are distinguished by different endings. Thus Tirana and Shkodra are the definite forms, Tiranë and Shkodër the indefinite. In this guide the definite form is normally used; the indefinite form usually appears in maps.

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

In order to produce a work of encyclopedic scope in accordance with the aims of the Nagel Encyclopedia-Guides it was necessary to approach the problem from different points of view. We have already published in our series of "Political Writings" ("Ecrits Politiques") the Memoirs of Enver Hoxha, undisputed leader of the People's Republic of Albania from 1944 until his death, in which he relates a succession of historical events experienced by the Albanian people—the occupation of the country by Mussolini, the organisation of resistance to the occupying forces, relations with Britain, relations and conflicts with Khrushchev, the breaking off of diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union. In spite of the abundance of detail on relations with the outside world and the consolidation of the Albanian state during the period he covers, however, he makes no mention of his country's achievements in the economic, cultural and social fields. For example: Albania is the only country in the world which bans both the government and its citizens from incurring foreign debt; in consequence the balance of payments is in equilibrium; the balance of trade presents no problems; Albanians pay no taxes or social contributions; all medical care is provided free; the maximum variation in salary levels is in the ratio 1:2; Albania exports electricity to Yugoslavia, Italy and Greece; it is the world's second largest exporter of chromium; unemployment is unknown; the development of museums and scientific institutions is proceeding rapidly; and the country's deliberate policy of isolation is designed to protect its independence and security.

After decades of isolation Albania has decided to open its frontiers to foreign visitors. But it is not possible to set out for Albania in the same way as for other European holiday countries: hence the need for this new guide in a series which has pioneered so many other countries.

To obtain information about entry requirements and the necessary visa prospective visitors should apply to the nearest Albanian consulate.

The list of those bodies and individuals who have helped in the preparation of this guide is a long one. Our particular

thanks are due to Messrs Naxhun Peka, Thomas Haxhi, Marenglen Spiro, Robert Escarpit, Christian Gut, Karasz, Estref Bega, Alfred Papuçiu, Mr and Mrs Marigo, and Mesdames Agnès Brunet-Gut, de Fontanes and Dominique Maurel, and to all those Albanians who contributed to our work.

INTRODUCTION

On 1st August 1964, around midday, a Yugoslav soldier opened up the barrier of barbed wire which separated the territory of Yugoslavia from that of Albania on a dirt road, flanked by oleanders, which ran along the hillside above Lake Shkodra. Driving with great care, I steered my grey Simca, with my wife and my son, then aged seventeen, as passengers, along the rocky track leading into the unknown country which few westerners had had the chance of visiting since the second world war: Albania.

I was going to Albania on the strength of an invitation from the Albanian government, which was ready to meet the desire of a former Byron specialist to follow the poet's route on his visit to Ali Pasha of Tepelena, and also on a semi-official mission on behalf of the French Foreign Ministry—an attempt to break the ice with a view to the resumption of cultural relations between Albania and France.

In the no man's land between the Yugoslav and Albanian frontier posts a bee found its way into the car, compelling me to stop briefly amid the silent mountains. Below the road was the magnificent spectacle of Lake Shkodra, partly covered by a growth of water plants. The air was warm and perfumed with the scent of grasses and flowers, but we could not help feeling a certain uneasiness at entering this other world, closed and impenetrable as it was reputed to be.

Finally, turning a corner, we saw a building: the Hani i Hotit, an old inn which was now a frontier post. In front of it we saw two men in shirt-sleeves playing dominoes, the frontier guard and the diplomat who had been sent from Tirana to welcome us.

We ought to have taken the Italian cargo ship which sailed between Bari and Durrës, or the road from the north-east which skirts the lake known to the Yugoslavs as Lake Ohrid and to the Albanians as Lake Pogradec; but I had preferred the coast road by way of Dubrovnik, Kotor and Titograd.

We followed the road to the capital, which had a reasonably good asphalt surface from Shkodra onwards but was sometimes rather bumpy. There is now a road approaching motorway standard between Titograd and Pogradec, and the final stretch of the railway line has been completed.

My first impression was of a return to the past. I saw the farm carts which I remembered from my childhood, and peasants bending over their hoes in the fields, and above all I felt the great quietness of a land without motor cars. Between Shkodra and Tirana I doubt if we met more than a dozen lorries. Only the colourful local costumes told us that we were at the gates of the East.

Tirana presented a striking contrast between the modern buildings under construction and the Turkish-style quarters with their old-world charm. In Skanderbeg Square, traversed by a few lorries and buses, the Dajti Hotel, completed after the departure of the Soviet advisers and experts in 1961, stood opposite the mosque, a marble-clad vision of elegance and beauty.

The Dajti Hotel, where I have always stayed since then, had the subtle perfume of raw wool which is given off by carpets in the Balkans. The lift was fairly rugged, with sliding doors as threatening as a guillotine. The rooms were clean and well lit. Downstairs, in the room where the official representatives were waiting for us, the high walls were covered with large dark red hangings. Later I came across the description of these hangings in Ismail Kadarë's *The General of the Dead Army*, in which the Italian general, arriving in the Dajti in the evening, wonders uneasily whether there may not be policemen or Red Guards concealed behind them.

I did not feel any similar anxiety. The men who met us that evening were simple, friendly and straightforward, and were later to become very dear friends: Misto Treska, Dhori Samsuri and Nonda Bulka, who soon turned out to be a formidable player of *belote*, capable of cheating in a manner found only in France in a café in town or a country inn. He won over my son right away, and I never go to Tirana without visiting his grave.

This was the first discovery: to all these men, former pupils of the school in Korça where Enver Hoxha had been a teacher, French language and culture had become second nature. Since gerontocracy is not in favour in Albania the "Korça generation" which established the Albanian Party of Labour has over the years given place to younger men and women, but the tradition has been maintained, and in Albanian schools and at Tirana University French still occupies a privileged place.

The second discovery was raki, the fruit spirit in which healths are drunk, to the cry of "gëzuar!" ("your health!"). It is one of the best white brandies I know. I soon learned to distinguish the subtle differences between different makes—the more delicate aroma of the raki of Përmet, the slight muscatel flavour of the raki of Pogradec. Coming from Bordeaux as I do, I am particularly interested in everything connected with wine, and Albanian wine, which is improving year by year with developments in methods of cultivation and vinification, is now of a quality which should earn it a high place in world markets.

Going from one vice to another—from alcoholism to tobacco addiction—it is perhaps not generally known that Albania is one of the world's leading producers of brier pipes. I make a point, on each of my visits, of renewing my stock.

Another unexpected export is frogs, whole lorry-loads of which, in a state of hibernation, are despatched to France for the delight of gourmets.

And this brings us on to the subject of Albanian cuisine, which is strongly influenced by Turkish cuisine but has special features of its own which appeal to a visitor from Gascony. Albanian yoghurt (*kos*) is an excellent breakfast dish, and is also used, with the addition of chopped cucumber, garlic and olive oil, to produce *tarator*, a delightfully refreshing dish for a hot summer's day.

For we must not forget that although Albania is a socialist country of extreme doctrinal rigour it is also a Mediterranean country which appreciates the pleasures that life has to offer. Half Béarnais as I am by descent, I felt immediately at home with these rough straightforward mountain people, who can put up with deprivation when necessary but are ready whenever opportunity offers to eat and drink, to amuse themselves, to sing and dance, and in general to enjoy life.

True, a whole generation sacrificed itself to enable later generations to live happy and free. Painfully, slowly, but without ever taking a step backwards, this people has advanced from destitution to poverty, from poverty to an austere material wellbeing, from austerity to *joie de vivre*. And the whole people knows what it owes to its history during the last forty-five years. Albania is probably the only country in the world whose citizens ask themselves when they get up each morning what they are going to be able to do for their country during the day.

It is not paradise, but hell has been left far behind. When the government decided, after Liberation, to make Albania's frontiers difficult to cross it was not to prevent the Albanians from making comparisons with the outside world. For many years there has been, on the hills above Tirana, a relay station of Radiotelevisione Italiana which makes it possible to receive news and pictures from Italy. If the Albanians sought to isolate themsdlves it was because they knew that their initial underdeveloped state made them obvious targets for imperialisms of all kinds, including the imperialism of the Soviet Union.

The Albania which I discovered in 1964 had undoubtedly made progress in the previous twenty years, and it is not surprising that the Albanians have remained grateful to Stalin for the aid he gave them during this critical period. When the break with the USSR came in Khrushchev's time, therefore, it was all the more traumatic. The Albania I knew in 1964 was still lacking in everything—in roads, railways, electricity, schools, medical equipment. A quarter of a century later the battle has been won without any compromise of principle. Since the Albanian constitution bans any foreign debt, and imports are possible solely on a basis of barter, it has all had to be done with the resources of Albania's soil and the energies of its people.

From time to time I have had occasion to compare photographs taken in 1964 with more recent ones. The contrast is striking. On the marvellous Albanian Riviera, between Vlora and Saranda, the hills which were once bare and barren are now covered right up to their summits with terraced plantations of walnuts, figs and citrus fruits. A valley which was once wild and inaccessible now contains one, two or three dams. Elbasan, once a small township, part Old Turkey and part Far West, with a wire-drawing mill and a cement factory, is now a mighty industrial centre with its installations extending as far as the eye can reach over the wide valley of the Shkumbin. Asphalted roads run from end to end of the country, supplemented by a network of dirt roads suitable for cars. From the capital to the smallest mountain village electricity is everywhere available, bringing light and comfort. All over the country, too, there are schools and medical services; and Tirana's University, its hospitals, laboratories and equipment, can bear comparison with any in Europe.

These modern developments, however, have not killed the country's traditional culture. The brilliant national costumes,

folk music and folk dances feature in every festive occasion. At Kruja, where only a few ruins of Skanderbeg's old castle survived, the fortress was rebuilt and now houses a historical museum; and the streets round the castle have been restored and are now occupied by a host of craftsmen's shops.

Great talents have come to the fore, innovators but still faithful to the past, in literature, music, the cinema and painting. Cultural life is active and creative, particularly in the theatre. But history is never forgotten, from that of the remotest times —before the Romans—to the history of the present century.

Skanderbeg, the national hero who fought the Turks in the 15th century, is a great figure in Albanian history, but the period of which the Albanians are proudest—and with reason—is the last fifty years of their history. This half century, which began with the partisans' struggle against the Fascist and later the Nazi occupation, has continued with a fierce struggle on two fronts—for national independence and for the building up of the country.

The hardest period was probably after the break with the Soviet Union in 1961. The dramatic episodes of this crisis were recounted by Ismail Kadarë in his novel *The Great Winter*. At one point Albanian and Soviet forces almost came into armed conflict over the control of the Vlora naval base. Faced with the inflexible determination of the Albanians the Russians withdrew; but their withdrawal was ruthless and total. In leaving Albania they took away not only their advisers and technicians but even the equipment they had supplied. Perhaps the most typical example of this was the Joseph Stalin textile plant in Tirana, which was stripped bare, the machinery dismantled, no spare parts, no maintenance materials. A real national mobilisation of will and of skill was necessary to resume production and make the plant what it is today, one of the most important textile manufacturing centres in Albania.

Chinese aid, which was given at this period, proved short-lived and disappointing; and it earned Albania a reputation for "Maoism" which it still retains in certain quarters. The theorists of Marxism settled the lines on which Albanian communism set itself apart both from Soviet "imperialism" and from Chinese "revisionism"; but it is clear that, apart from certain internal crises attributable to individuals rather than society as a whole, the Albanian Party of Labour (P.P.Sh.) has suffered no sharp changes of course such as occurred in the Soviet Union with the Khrushchev reforms, followed by the return

to a harder line and finally the emergence of Gorbachev's "new look", or in China with the sharp changes from hard-line Maoism to the period of the "hundred flowers", then the cultural revolution and finally the denunciation of the "Gang of Four", accompanied by a revision of the objectives of the socialist revolution. The Albanian line has never changed: to build up the country in national independence and to base the building of society on an ideology which makes no concessions. Those who see a change of course in the progressive opening up of Albania to the rest of the world are in error. Albania has never been closed: it has merely sought to protect itself against the designs of other countries so long as its state of under-development makes it a tempting prey.

All this was foreseen and planned by Enver Hoxha from the very beginning. A man of luminous intelligence imbued with French humanist culture, he was the very opposite of a dictator. He fulfilled his role as the historic guide of his country without using force, even though he showed himself inflexible in securing the maintenance of national discipline. Unlike many leaders intoxicated by power and popularity, he took great care to prepare his succession. There has been no "post-Hoxha" period: on his death the established line of policy was carried on without a moment's hesitation.

For those who know Albania well—and I think I can claim to know it— the striking thing is the continuity and the omnipresence of the collective effort to promote the country's steady advance towards improved wellbeing in independence and freedom. I have observed this effort from one end of the country to the other.

The Tropoja region in the far north, bordering on the Yugoslav territory of Kosovo with its two million Albanian inhabitants, is a permanent source of discord between Belgrade and Tirana. It is a region of mountains, perched among which are villages astonishingly like the villages of Béarn with their slate-slabbed roofs. Round Bajram Curri, chief town of the region, the peasants devote their efforts to improving the production of cereals in their cooperatives, while engineers prospect for new mineral resources in the rock. In this remote area, still served only by poor and difficult roads, the effort continues indefatigably—building huge dams, clearing the ground for cultivation, sowing, digging, working in the assurance of a better future.

In the far south, near the Greek frontier, is Saranda with its marvellous bay looking out on Corfu, and here tourism, fishing and agriculture are developing harmoniously together. A few kilometres away on a coast road is the archaeological site of Butrint. In 1964 the road was not really suitable for cars, and Butrint had to be reached by boat. For many years the motorboat was piloted by a jovial skipper with a large moustache who was reputed to be the best maker of fish soup on the coast. Entering the Butrint lagoon, the boat had to negotiate a great barrier of nets which with the movement of the tides captured the large fish glinting in silver and gold which tasted so good when cooked on a wood fire. In those days a solitary young archaeologist was scratching the soil to find the remains of the palace of Pyrrhus, king of Epirus, the scene of the tragic story of Andromache. Now the visitor can see the imposing complex of Illyrian, Greek and Roman structures which have been brought to light and are maintained by a competent staff provided with adequate resources.

And if the same eagerness to produce results is shown in the Butrint excavations as in the mineral prospecting and the farming activity in the Tropoja region this is because the Albanians are constantly concerned to put down roots in the land of their ancestors.

The Albanians believe that they are the descendants of the Illyrians, as the Rumanians claim to be descended from the Dacians. But who were the Illyrians? A visit to the Historical Museum in Tirana yielsd some first intimations of an answer to this question, but leaves the visitor unsatisfied. The Albanian language has peculiar features, some of which are said to be found also in Rumanian. It is believed to be an archaic Indo-European language, older than Homer's Greek; but one is tempted to wonder whether it does not rest on still older substrata. Some scholars have put forward the rather speculative hypothesis of a relationship between Albanian and Etruscan. Over the centuries Albania has suffered innumerable invasions and become a melting-pot of many peoples—Italians, whether Caesar's Romans or Mussolini's Fascists, Slavs, Turks and its Greek neighbours. The Albanian language bears the mark of these various strata superimposed on one another, the Vulgar Latin of the Roman legions, the debased Turkish of the janissaries; but it has contrived nevertheless to preserve its own deeply rooted and powerful personality.

Enver Hoxha was the very incarnation of this mingling of races and cultures which, strangely, remains obstinately faithful to its remote origins. It is characteristic that Besnik, which means "faithful", is one of the commonest forenames in Albania. Enver Hoxha's faithfulness to the destiny of his people and to the ideas of the party which he founded and directed make him a symbol and an example for the Albanian people which will never die.

Robert ESCARPIT

General Introduction

GEOGRAPHY

SITUATION

With its area of 28,748 sq. km Albania is one of the smallest European states, coming just after Belgium. Bordered on the west by the Adriatic, this state in the Balkan peninsula is bounded on the north and east by Yugoslavia and on the south by Greece.

It extends between latitude 39°38' and 42°39' N and between longitude 19°16' and 21°4' E. Its greatest length from north to south is 335 km, its greatest breadth from east to west 150 km.

Its highest point, Mt Korabi, situated on the Yugoslav frontier, reaches a height of only 2751 m, but the whole area of the country with the exception of the central region is covered by ranges of Dinaric hills, giving it an average altitude of 708 m, or twice the European average.

Separated from Italy only by the 75 km of the Straits of Otranto, Albania occupies a position of strategic importance in south-eastern Europe.

RELIEF

Four different regions can be distinguished in Albania: the coastal plain, the Alps, the central massif and the southern hills.

The Adriatic coast is generally low-lying. The alluvial soil carried down by the rivers flowing into the Adriatic forms offshore bars and lagoons and adds an average of 60 hectares to the country's land area every year. Formerly very marshy, the coastal area has been drained and planted with pines since the Liberation. Sheltered in large bays are the ports of Durrës (Durazzo), Vlora (Valona) and Shëngjin (San Giovanni di Medua). This Albanian Riviera extends from the Llogara pass in the north to Mt Shëndëlli in the south. It is extremely picturesque and enjoys a very mild and sunny climate of Mediterranean type, favourable to the cultivation of olives and citrus fruits. The centre of this region is Saranda, a small port used by coastal shipping but now mainly an important holiday resort.

The Albanian Alps—limestone mountains eroded by glaciers—occupy the most northerly part of the country, to the north of the river Drin. Their general direction is from south-west to north-east. The average altitude of the region is 1500 me-

tres, and most of the peaks are over 2000 metres. Rainfall is high (2 metres or more annually) and, carried down by fast-flowing mountain streams, leads to heavy erosion which has produced impressive karstic landscapes.

The central massif extends between the Drin and the Korça region, on a line running broadly from north-east to south-east. The average altitude is rather less than that of the Albanian Alps, though Mt Korabi reaches a height of 2751 m. The rocks, often of eruptive origin, give the hills a rather less steep profile Numerous valleys provide routes of passage between the hills.

In the southern hills the average altitude is about the same as in the central massif, but few of the peaks rise above 2000 m —though Mt Nëmerçka reaches 2489 m and Mt Tomori 2416 m. In the southern part of this region there are frequent examples of collapse structures.

CLIMATE

The climate is of continental type except in a narrow coastal strip in which it is Mediterranean. There are, however, considerable variations from this pattern.

The average annual temperature increases from north-east (7.5 °C) to south-east (17.5 °C). The Riviera has a January average ranging between +5 and +10 °C, while inland the range is between —3 and +2 °C. Very low temperatures are not exceptional, the lowest recorded being —34.7 °C at the resort of Biza, 35 km east of Tirana.

The July average is between 24 and 25 °C in most of the country, but avove 800 m the temperature falls to between 17 and 20 °C. The highest recorded summer temperature, at Qytet Stalin, is 43.9 °C.

Sunshine ranges between an annual 2000 hours at Kukës and 2700 hours at Fier and Saranda.

Rainfall is more abundant in Albania than in most other European countries, ranging from 600-700 mm annually in the Korça basin to over 3000 mm in the western Albanian Alps. Most of the rain falls in winter, but its level and intensity vary considerably from year to year.

RIVERS AND LAKES

These climatic conditions, combined with the country's fragmented and tormented pattern of relief, give rise to the large number of rivers (with a total length of 5000 km) and to their irregularity of flow: between 60 and 70% of the total flow is during the cold season, and there are frequent spates in winter and when the snow melts in spring. Much effort has been devoted to the canalisation and damming of the rivers and to reafforestation in order to limit the effects of these spates, which can be devastating.

The country's principal river is the Drin (285 km), the hydro-electric potential of which is now being exploited; three power stations have already been established and two others are projected. Other rivers are the Vjosa (272 km), the Shkumbin (181 km) and the Mat (115 km). The Seman (281 km) is a river of the plain, formed, at an altitude of 35 m above sea level, by the junction of two important rivers, the Devoll (196 km) which rises at 1500 m, and the Osum (161 km), which is formed at an altitude of 1100 m by the junction of many small mountain streams.

There are numerous lakes, some of tectonic origin (Lakes Shkodra, Ohrid, Prespa and Butrint), others karstic (particularly in the Dumre area) or glacial (e.g. the lakes of Lura), as well as coastal lagoons (Lakes Narta and Karavasta) and artificial lakes like those of Ulëz, Vau i Dejës and Fierza.

VEGETATION

Four main vegetation zones in different altitude ranges can be distinguished: Alpine meadow soils (above 1600 m, accounting for 9.6% of Albanian territory), brown forest soils (between 1000 and 1600 m; 14.8% of territory), coffee-coloured soils (between 600 and 1000 m; 38.3% of territory) and grey sub-desertic soils (up to 600 m; 15% of territory). The rest of the country consists of alluvial, marshy or salty soils.

The vegetation is extremely varied. Albania has 3200 species of plants, representing 29% of the European flora and 47% of the Balkan flora.

Here too the country's relief pattern leads to a vertical classification of zones: the olive-tree zone (up to 600 m), the oak zone (up to 1200 m), the beech and coniferous zone (up

to 1800-2000 m) and the Alpine meadow zone (above 1800-2000 m).

Forests cover 40% of the national territory. The commonest species are oak (26%), beech (14%) and pine (10%), and a quarter of the forest area consists of Mediterranean shrubs like arbutus, whitethorns, laurels, brambles, myrtles and pistachio-trees.

With this large area of forest, Albania has a rich fauna which includes bears, wolves, jackals and lynxes in addition to the usual European species. There are 340 species of birds, including eagles, black grouse, pelicans and wild geese. Albania's coastal waters, rivers and lakes are the home of 270 species of fish and an abundance of shellfish. Some species of fish are indigenous, like the *beluska* and the *koran*, delicately flavoured trout found only in Lake Ohrid.

POPULATION

It is estimated that the population of the present territory of Albania in 1876 was 740,000. The first official census, in 1923, recorded a total of 800,000 inhabitants. By 1938 the population had increased to a million, by 1945 to 1,100,000. Since then there has been a very rapid increase, to 2 million in 1965 and 3 million in 1985. If the present rate of increase (2% annually) is maintained the population of Albania will be approaching 4 million by the year 2000. This rate of increase is due to a fall in the death rate (from 17 per 1000 in 1938 to 5.7 per 7000 in 1984) and a continuing high birth rate (26.2 per 1000).

The average density of population is at present 103 per sq. kilometre. The density varies from 28 per sq. km in the Kolonja district to 260 per sq. km in the Tirana and Durrës districts, reflecting the vigorous development of the larger towns. The population living in towns of over 2000 inhabitants now amounts to 34% of the total, compared with 15.4% in 1938, and the 18 towns of over 10,000 inhabitants account for 80% of the urban population. The principal towns are Tirana (210,800 inhabitants), Durrës (75,800), Shkodra (72,500), Elbasan (72,000), Vlora (62,400) and Korça (58,000).

ECONOMY

Albania is one of the world's most egalitarian countries, with an income range which is the lowest in the world, varying according to qualifications only in the ratio of 1:2. Want is unknown.

The Albanian constitution prohibits the incurring of any foreign debt. The country's main economic resources are the minerals contained in its soil, representing very large capital assets which are increasingly being developed.

MINERAL RESOURCES

There was litle development of industry in Albania before the second world war. It represented barely 10% of the value of national production, and even the modest achievements of the prewar period suffered gravely from the fighting. A tremendous effort was therefore required after the war to develop the country's considerable natural resources; and a succession of annual, two-year and, from 1951, five-year plans orchestrated the national will to transform a traditional agricultural country into a modern industrial one.

Oil, extracted before the war at Kuçova (now Qytet Stalin), is now also worked in the Patos region. The country's reserves are estimated at 20 million tonnes. A large refinery at Ballsh, built in 1978, has supplemented those at Qytet Stalin, Fier and Cërrik.

The deposits of bitumen at Selenica, near Vlora, have been known since ancient times: Strabo tells us that it was used against parasites on vines. After many centuries of abandonment extraction was resumed in 1875 by a French firm, and is now very active.

Lignite was also worked before the war. The old mines at Kërrabë, Mborje and Drenova are still in production, but have now been overtaken by new mines at Memaliaj and Alarupi and the recently opened and very modern mines at Mëzez and Valias, near Tirana. The total output in 1984 was 2,010,000 tonnes.

Chromium is worked at Kama, Kalimash and above all at Bulqiza, where there is also a processing plant. With an output of 960,000 tonnes in 1984 Albania is Europe's leading producer and one of the largest producers in the world. Albanian ore is of excellent quality (over 40% chromium oxide).

Copper is worked at Rubik, Kurbnesh and Gjegjan. The Rubik mine was the only one in operation before the second world war; its ore has high metal content (5%). There is an enrichment plant at Rubik and another at Laç. Kurbnesh, near Rubik, where copper was discovered in 1956, appears to have large reserves. The most important centre of production, however, in operation since 1961, is at Gjegjan, the ore being treated at Kukës. Modern copper smelting plants have been established at Laç and Rubik. In 1984 a total of 1,010,000 tonnes of ore was extracted, and 12,500 tonnes of blister and 30,000 tonnes of copper wire were produced.

Deposits of ferro-nickel were located by the Italians at the beginning of the second world war, but production did not get under way until 1968, at Pishkash. The main workings are at Përrënjas and Gur i Kuq, which has an enrichment plant. The ore, 1,080,000 tonnes of which were extracted in 1984, is of excellent quality (no sulphur, 45-50% of iron and 1% of nickel on average).

INDUSTRY

Before the second world war Albania produced practically no electric power. The country's first hydroelectric station, the Lenin Power Station near Tirana, was built just after the war (1947-51), and a thermo-electric station was built at Qytet Stalin.

A huge programme for using the hydroelectric wealth of Albania's rivers was then set on foot. The *Karl Marx* station (1952-57) and the *Friedrich Engels* (1959-63) were built on the Mat, and stations at Vau i Dejës (1967-71), Fierza (1971-78) and Koman (1985) on the Drin. The *Enver Hoxha* station at Koman is the largest in the country. A large thermo-electric station was opened at Fier in 1966 and its capacity was doubled in 1981.

Albania now exports electricity to Yugoslavia and Greece. The total production of electric power in 1984 was nearly 3.8 billion kWh, 80% of it from hydroelectric stations.

The other branches of industry play a lesser part in the economy, but they are in process of steady and rapid development.

In the chemical industry there are plants producing soda and PVC at Vlora, nitrogen products at Fier and sulphuric acid and superphosphates at Laç.

Albania's abundance of forests has promoted the development of the timber-processing and cellulose industries at Laç; the main centres of these industries, however, are Elbasan and Tirana.

Heavy metallurgy is mainly at Tirana (*Enver Hoxha* and *Dinamo* tractor combines) and Elbasan (*Celiku i partisë* or "Steel of the Party" combine). Nails and bolts are manufactured at Kavaja, domestic utensils at Tirana and Gjirokastër, precision instruments at Korça. Lushnja has a large plastics factory. The country's largest paper-mill is at Lezha. Other industries are textiles at Tirana, Berat and Shkodra, leather goods and footwear at Tirana, electronic apparatus at Durrës, etc.

The foodstuffs industries are dispersed throughout the country. Particularly notable are the huge *Ali Kelmendi* combine at Tirana, the fish-canning plants at Vlora and the tobacco factories at Shkodra and Durrës.

Craft industry makes a considerable contribution, being responsible for producing much of the country's output of clothing and footwear, cutlery and brass and copper ware, as well as luxury products like carpets, silk fabrics, leather goods, filigree work, etc.

But Albania still remains mainly an agricultural country. Agriculture provides employment for 55% of the working population, even though only 24% of the country's total area is under cultivation.

AGRICULTURE

The collectivisation of agriculture which was put in train after the Liberation was completed some 20 years ago. It has led more generally to the establishment of cooperatives, usually of considerable size (up to 3000 hectares, with an average of 1300 hectares) rather than state farms, which occupy only 21.4% of the total cultivable area and produce 26.7% of total agricultural output.

Yields are still low, but they are improving from year to year as a result of the attention devoted to training, drainage and irrigation, the progress of mechanisation, the development of improved strains and the use of fertilisers. The agricultural balance yields the same small surplus each year—varying not according to consumption by the population but to the objectives of the plan, which aims at self-sufficiency in food for the country.

The principal crop in north-eastern Albania is now wheat. The best yields are obtained in the Puka and Peshkopi regions. Maize, however, traditionally the staple food of Albania, is still of considerable importance.

The area devoted to rice, which is cultivated in the marshy regions of Elbasan, Durrës, Saranda and Shkodra, is increasing.

The only industrial crop grown on any scale before the war was tobacco, which in 1938 occupied almost 50% of the area devoted to industrial crops. The percentage has now fallen to a third of this, although the area under industrial crops has multiplied tenfold. Tobacco grows well almost everywhere in Albania, but particularly in the Elbasan and Shkodra regions. Much of the crop is exported, either in leaf or in the form of cigarettes, accounting for 60% of total agricultural exports.

Cotton is grown mainly round Fier and Lushnja. The cultivation of sugar-beet, which was introduced only after the second world war, is concentrated round Maliq.

Vines grow in Albania up to an altitude of 800 m. Most parts of the country, therefore, produce wine and raki, but the best kinds come from the Shkodra, Përmet, Leskovik and Pogradec areas. Numerous spirits are also produced, notably an excellent cognac.

Olives are grown in the south-west of the country up to 600 m. 78% of the crop is used to produce olive oil. The olives of the Berat region are reputed to be the best eating olives. For local consumption olive oil has to compete with more recently introduced vegetable oils like colza oil and particularly sunflower oil, which now represents over 60% of the total production of vegetable oils.

Fruit trees are cultivated in the Tropoja region (apples and pears) and the Korça and Kolonja regions (plums). Figs and walnuts are also grown.

Citrus fruits are mainly concentrated in the coastal areas between Vlora and Konispol, where there are very large plantations.

Stock-farming, mainly sheep, is an important traditional resource, though its share of the national agricultural product is tending to fall. It now represents only 29% of the total, compared with 50% in 1938. It is found mainly on the natural grassland of northern Albania. The authorities are encouraging the development of modern establishments of industrial type.

Cattle-rearing is mainly concentrated in the north, and there are still a few buffaloes in the Myzeqe area. Pig-farming, strongly encouraged by the authorities, is making rapid progress, in spite of the prejudices of religious origin which persist in some parts of the country.

There are large numbers of hens, turkeys and ducks, mainly reared on an industrial scale (e.g. in batteries).

Excellent honey is produced in many parts of the country.

FISHERIES

Albania's coastal waters and most of its rivers and lakes are well stocked with fish, and fishing, which was very backward before the war, has made and is continuing to make notable progress, with the total catch rising from 800 tonnes in 1938 to 2500 in 1950 and 15,500 in 1982. The fishermen work in cooperatives and now have modern boats built at Durrës. There is a fishery research station, established in 1950. Carp and trout are now reared in fish farms, and mussel breeding is being developed.

TRANSPORT

Albania has 12,000 kilometres of roads, and the main roads are now asphalted.

The country's first railway line, from Durrës to Peqin (44 km), was opened only in 1947. There are now 440 km of lines, linking Tirana with Shkodra (and now, with the extension to Titograd, linking up with the European rail network) and with Durrës and Vlora. The line to Korça is approaching completion. There are also a number of branch lines serving industrial needs.

There are coastal shipping services, using small boats of around 500 tonnes, between Shëngjin and Durrës (60 km), Durrës and Vlora (110 km) and Vlora and Saranda (120 km).

Albania also has larger cargo vessels (like the *Arbëria*, 16,350 tonnes) used for foreign trade, mainly based on the port of Durrës, which can handle ships of 25,000 tonnes. The port of Vlora can take only vessels of up to 5000 tonnes, but it has a landing point for tankers in the bay.

HISTORY

The territory of present-day Albania has been inhabited since the Middle Palaeolithic (100,000-40,000 B.C.), but the first considerable traces of civilisation date only from the Neolithic (6000-2000 B.C.). They were revealed when the draining of Lake Maliq, near Korça, brought to light the remains of a lake settlement.

At the beginning of the Bronze Age we find Illyrian tribes appearing over a large territory ranging from Istria to the Save and the Gulf of Arta and extending even into Calabria.

ILLYRIAN ORIGINS

The Illyrian civilisation is very imperfectly known, for the writers of classical antiquity have left us only a few isolated words of the Illyrians' language and some accounts of their way of life and beliefs, which appear to have been fairly similar to those of other Indo-European tribes.

As a result of archaeological excavation, however, we know that, in addition to farming and stock-rearing, the Illyrians excelled in the extraction and working of metals. They also engaged in trade, and indeed in piracy. These activities soon brought them into contact with the Greeks, and Greek settlers coming from Corinth or perhaps from Corfu founded the colonies of *Epidamnos* (Durrës) in 627 B.C. and *Apollonia* (Pojan) in 588 B.C. These towns grew and flourished, but internal discord and war, particularly the Peloponnesian War, soon brought them under the domination of their Macedonian and Illyrian neighbours, who by this time were beginning to have organised kingdoms.

The Ardiaean kingdom came to the fore in the reign of Agron (250-231 B.C.), who several times defeated the Aetolians. These successes worried the Romans, who compelled him, after a short war, to give up his conquests and become a vassal of Rome—a relationship which ended in the occupation of the whole of Illyria in 168 B.C.

After a number of risings the Illyrians came to accept the Roman peace, based on lines of communication like the *Via Egnatia* from Rome to Salonica and Constantinople, which entered Albania at *Dyrrachium* (the Latin name of Durrës) and *Apollonia* and followed the valley of the *Genusus* (Shkumbin).

As in other countries, Roman influence was mainly felt in the towns and along the roads, so that the mass of the population preserved their traditions and their language.

Under Diocletian's reorganisation of the Empire in 305 A.D. Illyria became one of its principal administrative divisions.

In 395, when the Empire was divided after the death of Theodosius, the prosperous province of Illyria passed to the Eastern Empire. The devastation wrought by the invasions of the 5th century had barely been made good during the reign of Justinian (527-565) when the Slavs poured into the region. The arrivals submerged the Illyrian population in Dalmatia, but the Illyrians managed to maintain themselves in the area round Albania and Kosovo (now part of Yugoslavia). From the 7th century the very name of Illyria disappears from the texts, but archaeological excavation revealed the Koman civilisation (from the name of the village where the first remains were found in 1898), which established a direct filiation between the Illyrians and the Albanians.

In order to facilitate the defence of the country against the enemies who were threatening it from all quarters, the Emperor Leo III (717-741) divided it into two "themes", centred on Durrës in the north and Nicopolis in the south. Byzantine authority, however, was increasingly threatened by the Bulgars. Tsar Boris (852-907) seized *Antipatras* (Berat) and *Apollonia*, and his successors gradually occupied the whole of the country.

INVASION AND OCCUPATION

After the overthrow of the Byzantine Empire by the Crusaders (1204) the Serbs and Bulgars moved into northern and eastern Albania, the Venetians occupied Durrës and an independent despotate of Epirus was established with its capital at *Nicopolis*.

A new competitor now entered the field in the person of Charles of Anjou, who after defeating Manfred of Hohenstaufen at Benevento (1266) took up Manfred's claims to Albania. In 1272 he declared himself king of Albania and occupied the country, but the intrigues of the Byzantines expelled him again in 1286, though the Byzantine Empire was unable to reassert its own control over the country. In the 14th century the reality of power belonged to local feudal lords who were perpetually in conflict among themselves, with the successors of Charles of Anjou, with the Serbian kings and, towards the end of the

century, with Venice, which had re-established itself in Durrës and Shkodra.

This situation facilitated the Turkish conquest. By 1420 the Turks had occupied the Mat region, with the exception of Durrës, which remained Venetian until 1501. This region constituted the *sanjak* of Albania, with the system of *timars* (military fiefs) which was to be the basis of the administrative organisation of the Turkish empire until the 19th century.

Meanwhile the north of the country was left in the hands of the local feudal lords, subject to the payment of tribute (*haraç*) and the obligation of military service.

There were numerous rebellions against Turkish authority, both by the population of the annexed territories and by the feudal lords, but these led only to massacres or to further annexations.

SKANDERBEG, ALBANIA'S NATIONAL HERO

It was, however, the youngest son of one of these feudal lords, sent to the Sultan's court as a hostage, who was to lead the Albanian clans in resistance to the Turks and to become the national hero of Albania and one of the great European figures of his time.

Gjergj Kastrioti, born in 1405, was very young when he was taken to the Sultan's court. Having become a convert to Islam (when he received the Moslem forename of Skënder), he enlisted in the Turkish army, where his bravery and talents won him the friendship of Sultan Murad II and brought him promotion to high rank. But Skanderbeg had not forgotten his country, and in November 1443 the defeat inflicted on the Turks at Niš by John Hunyadi, voivode of Transylvania, gave him the opportunity for which he had been waiting. He left the battle-field, returned quickly to Albania, obtained control of the citadel of Kruja by a ruse, raised the standard of revolt and, without losing a moment, established an Albanian League, of which he was elected captain-general. Some of the feudal lords were reluctant to accept his leadership, and some indeed were prepared to betray him. From Venice he received only grudging support, and indeed at one time, in 1448, the League came into armed conflict with the Venetian republic.

Thus it was only the organisation he managed to impose on the country and his own outstanding military skill that enabled

Skanderbeg to win some twenty victories over the Turkish empire, then at its apogee, and to become for 20 years the "bulwark of Christendom".

He died in 1468 during a meeting of the League, ridding Mehmet II, the conqueror of Constantinople, of the man who had been the main obstacle to the Ottoman Empire's advance into Europe.

Skanderbeg's death sounded the knell of Albanian independence. Kruja, Lezha and Shkodra fell to the Turks in 1478, and Durrës was abandoned by Venice in 1501.

THE TURKISH CENTURIES

For more than four centuries the whole of Albania was to remain under Turkish occupation. After a century of wars the country was totally ruined. At the beginning of the 16th century one of its largest towns, Vlora, had a population of no more than 4000.

During the 16th and 17th centuries the Turks sought to reduce the liberties which they had been compelled to grant to the Albanians, and the Albanians for their part tried to avoid paying what they had promised. The result was an alternation of revolts and repressions. The resentment caused by the increased fiscal pressure led to the formation of armed leagues, known as "convents", whose leaders sought support from neighbouring countries; but none of the risings fomented by the convents achieved anything.

All these disturbances, the inadequacy of the Christian clergy in both numbers and quality and the taxes levied on the Christian population led to a wave of conversions to Islam. It is notable that of all the Balkan countries Albania was the one in which such conversions were most numerous.

In the country areas the authority of the feudal lords, the *sipahis*, became increasingly burdensome during the 16th and 17th centuries. The feudal system, however, made little headway in the mountain regions, which were difficult of access and defended by warlike tribes, and in these areas the Turkish authorities were compelled to tolerate the continued existence of traditional patriarchal communities.

On the other hand the state of the towns and the condition of their inhabitants gradually improved as a result of the considerable development of craft production. Almost entirely

confined to the making of weapons in the 16th century, it later extended to the manufacture of clothing, boots and shoes, and pottery.

The growth of towns was also promoted by the development of trade, using caravans and coastal shipping. The population of Berat, Vlora and Elbasan increased fivefold between the beginning of the 16th century and the end of the 17th.

During the 18th century there was a marked development of agriculture, with the clearance of new land for cultivation and the introduction of new crops like rice, citrus fruits, cotton and above all maize, which still makes an important contribution to the Albanian economy.

Trade by land and sea now reached out beyond the frontiers of the Turkish empire—to Poland, Austria, Italy and France. Cereals, skins, wool, oil and timber were exported, and industrial products were imported. The volume of trade was sufficient to warrant the establishment of consulates in Shkodra and Durrës by a number of European states (France, Venice, Holland, Ragusa, Austria).

Schools now began to open, particularly for the Moslems (the medreses of Berat). In 1744 a group of intellectuals established an "academy" in Voskopoja which gave an excellent education modelled on the universities of western Europe, the tuition being in Greek.

The Orthodox churches were now decorated by talented painters and wood-carvers.

In the political field the 18th century saw the establishment and development of the large Albanian *pashaliks* centred on Shkodra, Berat and Ioannina. Almost at once these pashaliks asserted their desire for independence of, and indeed their hostility to, the Ottoman occupation, and were ready to ally themselves, as occasion suggested, with Austria, Russia, Napoleonic France or Britain. The pashas had their own courts, which were visited by many foreign travellers, notable among them Lord Byron.

Alongside their intense diplomatic and military activity the pashas devoted much effort to the administrative organisation of their territories. Their power alarmed the Sultan; but in fact it took him only some ten years to dispose of the large Albanian pashaliks.

Sultan Mahmud II (1808-39), after vanquishing the Albanian pashas as he had vanquished the janissaries, made some attempt

to modernise the country, officially ending the *timar* system, which had in fact already fallen into desuetude. It was left to his successor Abdul Majid, however, to introduce a series of major reforms. The object, theoretically at least, was to establish equality between the subjects of the Sultan in all his domains. These reforms were brought into effect gradually, but they remained a dead letter in the mountain regions of northern Albania, where traditional customs continued to apply. The reforms did not, however, suppress existing abuses, and popular discontent found expression in a series of risings, which soon spread to the whole of southern Albania.

Between 1830 and 1840 there came into being in Albania, as in other parts of the Ottoman empire, a movement of cultural renaissance, the *Rilindja*, aimed at asserting the national identity.

The western powers, for their part, encouraged the Sultan to pursue his reforms—which, however, brought little improvement. Indeed the modernisation programme led to increases in taxation, which gave rise to further risings, bringing about the crisis of 1875.

In 1875 revolts broke out in Bosnia and Herzegovina, followed by others in Bulgaria in 1876. They were ruthlessly repressed, and this led Serbia and Montenegro, rapidly followed by Russia, to declare war on the Sublime Porte. At the same time a number of leading figures in southern Albania met at Ioannina and drew up a memorandum to the Sultan calling for the bringing together of all Albanian territories in one administrative unit, the use of the Albanian language in the administration and in schools and lawcourts, the application of the greater part of the Albanian tax yield for the benefit of the region and a right for Albanians to do their military service in their own country. These demands were repeated consistently until 1912.

Although they put up a valiant defence, the Ottoman armies were defeated on all fronts and Turkey was obliged to sign the treaty of San Stefano, which provided for the ceding of all Albanian territory to Serbia, Montenegro and "Greater Bulgaria".

The discontent to which this settlement gave rise led to the formation of the League of Prizren, a committee of leading Albanians concerned to prevent the dismemberment of Albania. This was an effective political and military organisation whose aim was to establish itself as a national government. They sent

the great powers an important memorandum drafted by Pasco Wassa, a patriot well known for his writings. The Congress of Berlin (13 July 1878) revised the treaty of San Stefano, giving the Albanians satisfaction as regards their eastern and northern frontiers; but it gave Montenegro the territories of Ulqin, Plava and Guçi, which were peopled by Albanians. This provoked a violent reaction by the Albanian League in 1878-81.

After the crisis of the last few years the great powers were concerned to maintain the status quo in the Balkans. Britain and France wanted to enjoy in peace the economic privileges they had won from the Sultans and prevent Russia from gaining access to the Mediterranean and Austria-Hungary from getting Salonica, while Russia and Austria-Hungary, like Italy, were anxious to gain time for developing their influence by peaceful means.

Paradoxically, this desire for equilibrium between contradictory ambitions led to the conclusion of the Triple Alliance at the beginning of the 20th century.

Albanian patriots felt that the time was not favourable for armed revolt and that a complete separation from Turkey was not advisable because of the ambitions of the neighbouring states. Their demands, therefore, were directed towards matters in the cultural and administrative domain; and it was during this period that the teaching of the Albanian language became more or less official.

In April 1896 the Sultan appointed a commission to carry out reforms in Macedonia, and this alarmed the Albanians, who were in a majority in the vilayet of Monastir and saw the proposal as a first step towards a Macedonia which would theoretically be self-governing but would in practice be under Bulgarian influence.

1897 and 1898 were two years of intense political activity which saw the formation of armed bands and the establishment of the League of Peja. The Sultan, on the pretext of disturbances which had taken place in Kosovo, sent in 40,000 troops, thus putting an end to the League.

The last years of the Ottoman empire were marked by the penetration into all parts of the empire of various foreign influences which came into conflict with one another. In Albania the conflict was between Austria-Hungary and Italy. At the beginning of the 20th century an exchange of notes between the two rival countries recognised the country as a zone of

joint influence and contemplated the establishment of a self-governing Albanian principality. This agreement did not, however, prevent the two powers from competing to extend their influence in every direction, in the commercial, industrial, religious and cultural fields.

These foreign machinations alarmed the Albanians, and, on the initiative of Bajo Topulli, a "Secret Committee for the Liberty of Albania" was formed at Monastir. This circulated clandestine propaganda and organised armed bands which, in alliance with Macedonian irregular forces, inflicted heavy losses on the Turkish army.

Thereafter there were continual risings and disturbances. In 1910 a major revolt in Kosovo, continuing in the mountains of Shkodra in the following year, obliged the authorities to make concessions, which were almost immediately qualified. In 1912 the insurgents occupied Skoplje and secured a new and more favourable agreement recognising the autonomy of the Albanian provinces.

In October of that year, however, the outbreak of the Balkan war and the military collapse of the Ottoman empire showed that, in the words of Ismail Qemal, "the time had come for the Albanians to take vigorous measures for their own salvation"—for there was every reason to fear that the country would be partitioned and shared between the victors. The determination of the population, pressure from local clubs and committees, the support of patriotic societies and foreign opinion and the favourable attitude of Britain, Italy and above all Austria-Hungary: all these factors persuaded Ismail Qemal that the hour had come. Landing at Durrës on 21 November 1912, he called on Albanian patriots to join him. On 28 November 83 delegates from all over the country and from the different religious communities met in Vlora, constituted themselves into a National Assembly and proclaimed Albanian independence on the motion of Ismail Qemal, who was invited to form a provisional government.

INDEPENDENCE

On 17 December 1912 the ambassadors of the six great powers (Austria-Hungary, Britain, France, Germany, Italy and Russia) met in conference in London to examine means of resolving the Balkan conflict The principle of an autonomous Albania was accepted, but there was fierce debate on the de-

marcation of its frontiers. Finally on 29 July 1913 the great powers recognised the separation of Albania from Turkey and its complete independence; but almost half the territories peopled by Albanians were assigned to neighbouring countries, and Ismail Qemal's government was made subject to supervision by an international commission, which soon supplanted it (January 1914). The great powers then conferred the throne on a German prince, William of Wied, who established a short-lived government in Durrës. Six months later he left the country, which was being torn apart by a peasant revolt and Greek incursions in the south-east. The great powers disregarded the decisions they had taken a year earlier declaring Albania's neutrality and turned the country into a battlefield. Then in April 1915 they went even further, signing the secret treaty of London which, in flagrant violation of the decisions of 1913, provided for the partition of Albania between the neighbouring countries and Italy.

The high command of the French eastern armies was obliged to make a concession to the Albanian national movement in order to secure their rear. The French military authorities recognised the right of the local people to govern themselves, to have their own schools and to fly their national flag.

At the peace conference at the end of the first world war and in other quarters various plans were considered for dismembering Albania or putting it under the overlordship of one or another of the great powers. This aroused great indignation in Albania, and the Congress of Lushnja, meeting in January and February 1920, re-established the country's independence and sovereignty, laid the foundations of the Albanian state and put an end to any interference by foreign powers in the affairs of Albania and to any form of dependence on such powers. In the summer of 1920, after the battle of Vlora, Italy was compelled to withdraw its occupying forces from southern Albania.

The movement for the democratisation of the country's life, actively opposing obscurantist feudal elements, led to the democratic revolution of June 1924. The new government formed under the leadership of Fan Noli, a prominent Albanian personality, announced a programme of reform and sought to pursue an independent foreign policy—a line unwelcome not only to local reactionary forces but also to the governments of the great powers and to neighbouring states. Six months later, in December 1924, Fan Noli's government was overthrown

and Ahmed Zogu came to power with the help of mercenary troops and the direct support of the Yugoslav authorities.

A few days later an assembly wholly under his influence appointed him President of the Republic and granted him full powers. He declared his intention of modernising the country; but, lacking the necessary capital, he applied to Fascist Italy, with which he signed the pact of Tirana.

On 1 September 1928 Ahmed Zogu secured a revision of the constitution which enabled him to be proclaimed king of Albania under the style of Zog I. Some reforms were carried through with the help of a new Italian loan, which increased Mussolini's stranglehold on the weak Albanian economy. Then on 25 March 1939, encouraged by the lack of international reactions to Hitler's annexations of territory, Mussolini presented to the Albanian government, in the form of an ultimatum, a draft treaty which amounted to the complete annexation of the country. In spite of some attempts at resistance Albania was occupied in three days and Zog fled to Greece. A puppet assembly offered the crown to Victor Emmanuel III. Customs duties between the two countries were then abolished, ruining Albania's craft industry and trade. All this, combined with the massive inflow of Italian settlers and the establishment of Fascist organisations in Albania, gave rise to much discontent and resentment among the population, which found vent in demonstrations, strikes and acts of sabotage.

Finally when the Axis powers launched an attack on the Soviet Union the various communist groups in Albania overcame their divisions and on 8 November 1941 founded the Albanian Communist Party under the leadership of Enver Hoxha.

ENVER HOXHA'S ALBANIA

Enver Hoxha was born to a middle-class family in Gjirokastër in 1908 and went to the French *lycée* in Korça. He then lived for some time in Paris, where he worked on the communist newspaper *L'Humanité*. Returning to Albania, he organised communist activity there, but was soon compelled to go underground, having been condemned to death in absentia. He then directed the young communist party in an armed struggle against the Italian occupying forces, with numerous attacks on personnel and installations and many acts of sabotage.

The results and reputation he thus achieved enabled the Albanian Communist Party to call a Congress of National

Liberation in 1942 to which all patriots were invited without distinction of party or religion. The congress resolved to establish a National Liberation Front to coordinate the struggle against the occupying forces, and by the end of 1942 almost 2000 men had taken to the maquis, controlling much of the mountainous region in central and southern Albania.

The opposition forces also organised themselves, forming a nationalist and anti-communist movement, the *Balli Kombëtar* (National Front).

When Italy capitulated on 8 September 1943 Albania was occupied by 70,000 German troops, who declared the country's independence and set up a government favourable to the Balli Kombëtar. They were unable, however, to overcome the communist resistance.

In October 1944 the Congress of Berat established a provisional government led by Enver Hoxha, and on 28 November the new government made its solemn entry into Tirana. On the following day the liberation of the national territory was complete.

There had been a heavy price to pay for this victory—28,000 killed, 12,000 wounded and 45,000 interned, out of a population of barely more than a million. A third of the country's houses, livestock and farming areas had been wiped out, and canals, bridges and ports had been destroyed.

The government immediately took the necessary steps to establish its authority and direct the country on a new path: purges carried out by revolutionary tribunals, confiscation of profits made during the war, requisitioning of property, nationalisations, a radical land reform, etc.

The National Liberation Front, now renamed the Democratic Front, organised an election which resulted in a complete victory for the single list of candidates put forward by the Front (93% of votes, with 90% of electors voting). On 11 January 1946 Albania was declared a People's Republic.

Britain and the United States excluded Albania from most of the discussions on the organisation of the post-war world and delayed its admission to the United Nations until 1955. The new regime also had to resist Tito's ambition to incorporate Albania in the Yugoslav federation, and it was only after the condemnation of Yugoslavia by Cominform in 1948, with which Albania at once associated itself, that the Albanian government was able to break free of any Titoist entanglement.

In November 1948 the first Congress of the Albanian Party of Labour (APL; in Albanian P.P.Sh.) was held. This marked a turning point in the life of the party and the country and gave the necessary directives for the building of the bases of socialism. The congress decided to purge the party and strengthen its control over the administration, approved a two-year plan (1949-50) giving priority to industrialisation and particularly to the extractive industries, and adopted measures for the development and collectivisation of agriculture.

Good relations with the socialist countries, particularly with the Soviet Union, promoted the success of the first five-year plan (1951-55). Relations between Albania and the Soviet Union, however, gradually deteriorated, and their differences of view were openly revealed when, at a meeting in Bucharest in June 1960, the Albanian delegates refused to support Khrushchev's anti-Chinese line. At a conference of the 81 communist parties in November Enver Hoxha attacked Khrushchev's views with a vigour which scandalised some people, and the Albanian delegation left Moscow before the end of the meeting.

The Soviet Union reacted by abruptly halting the aid which they had been giving Albania, and their example was followed by the satellite countries. In 1961 the Soviet Union broke off diplomatic relations with Albania.

These events endangered the fulfilment of the third five-year plan (1961-65), the objectives of which, in spite of Chinese aid, could be approached only as a result of the tremendous commitment of the population as a whole.

The fifth Congress of the APL (1966) launched an attack on bureaucratisation (halving of number of state employees, abolition of ranks in army), the attachment to personal wealth (restriction of salary range to 1:2 ratio, reduction in area of private land-holdings) and the drift from the land (provision of electricity to all villages, achieved in 1970, a year ahead of programme: the finest achievement of the fourth five-year plan). Enver Hoxha himself gave the signal for the emancipation of women and against the persistence of religious practices.

Collaboration between China and Albania undoubtedly contributed to the progress achieved under the 4th and 5th five-year plans.

The seventh Congress of the APL approved the new constitution which came into effect in December 1976. This declared Albania to be a "Socialist People's Republic, a state based

on the dictatorship of the proletariat", and stressed the role of the Albanian Party of Labour, the vanguard of the working class, and the importance of Marxist-Leninist ideology and the class struggle.

The work of the congress clearly revealed the ideological and political divergences which had existed for some time between Albania and China and were aggravated by the visits to Peking by President Nixon in 1971 and Marshal Tito in 1977. The gulf between the two countries became steadily wider, and in July 1978 China halted its aid to Albania. As a result the sixth five-year plan could not be completely achieved. The 7th plan (1981-85), however, was a success, symbolised by the completion of the hydroelectric station at Koman, the largest in the country, with an installed capacity of 600,000 kWh and an annual output of 2 billion kWh.

The political landscape was darkened by the deterioration of relations with Yugoslavia following the measures taken against the Albanians of Kosovo after the events of 1981.

On 11 April 1985 Enver Hoxha died and was succeeded as First Secretary of the Party by Ramiz Alia, who had previously been president of the presidium of the People's Assembly. Born at Shkodra in 1925 and a member of the Communist Party from 1943, he had been one of Enver Hoxha's oldest and most faithful collaborators.

ARCHAEOLOGY AND ARCHITECTURE

PREHISTORY

The first objects giving evidence of human occupation within the territory of Albania—flaked flint implements found at Xara and in the Shën Marina cave (Saranda)—date from the Middle Palaeolithic (40,000-25,000 B.C.). The Neolithic (6000-2000 B.C.) is represented at Vlushë (Skrapar), Blaz (Mat), Kolsh (near Kukës), Cakran (near Fier), where underground dwellings and the oldest pottery kilns in the country were found, Dunavec (near Korça) and Maliq. The last two of these sites were lake settlements, a type of habitation which seems, on the evidence of Herodotus, to have remained in use by the Illyrians until the 5th century B.C.

The oldest fortified site is Kamnik (Kolonja), on a rocky crag strengthened by a roughly formed glacis of stones. A similar technique was employed in the Bronze Age (1500-1200 B.C.) at the Illyrian citadel of Marshej, near Shkodra. At Maliq the entrance to the fortress was protected by an earth embankment retained by timber stakes.

Stone ramparts are found only from the beginning of the Iron Age. In some cases they are used only to reinforce the most vulnerable points, as at Tren (near Korça), where the rampart provided a refuge, when danger threatened, for the inhabitants of the cave below it. The rock engravings on the walls of the cave and the abundance of objects found in it show that the cave was occupied for a long period of time.

Another imposing work of fortification is the drystone wall, 500 m long and between 2.30 and 3 m thick, barring the Zvesda pass, some 20 km from Korça, and commanding the road from Korça to Skoplje. On the basis of comparison with similar structures in Greece the wall is dated to the 8th century B.C., but it is believed to have remained in use until the 4th century to protect the kingdom of the Enkeletes against Macedonian incursions.

All these sites have yielded an abundance of objects of all kinds: weapons and implements of flaked or polished flint, bronze and iron, jewellery, decorated pottery utensils, anthropomorphic statues, etc. The richest sources of material, however, are tombs, the largest of which are collective burials, often ranged in circles round a central tomb rising above the ground.

The most important site of this kind is at *Kuç i Zi*, south-east of Korça, which comprises 183 tombs set in a circle 43 m in diameter. It has been suggested that this arrangement in a circle may point to a solar cult. There are, however, other collective tombs with other interesting features, no doubt reflecting the religious conceptions of their builders. Thus in the Kukës region there is a site at Krumë where the central tomb has a pitched stone roof and another at Qinimak where there are pathways linking the tombs with one another.

These discoveries have revealed the existence of two distinct cultural zones, the Devoll culture in the south-east of the country, with painted pottery and heavy bronze ornaments, and the Mat culture, which has grey or black pottery decorated with flutings or incisions.

From the 3rd century B.C. the increasing use of burial by incineration reduces the amount of material recovered. It is interesting, however, to observe that this distinction between the north and the south of the country is still found in the early medieval period, in the traces left by the Arbëresh civilisation which formed a link between the Illyrian and Albanian periods.

EARLY CHRISTIAN PERIOD

Albania has something like fifty buildings dating from the early Christian period (4th-11th centuries). They can be classified on the basis of their plan into the basilican type, the aisleless type and the concentric type.

Basilican plan

The basilicas of antiquity—purely secular buildings—were built on a rectangular plan, with a central area and two lateral aisles, usually narrower; the entrance was in one of the longitudinal walls. The roof was of timber (the Hellenistic type) or vaulted in stone (the Oriental type).

The Christians had no hesitation in using these pagan basilicas for their worship. Some of their buildings consisted almost entirely of re-used masonry, as at Amantia. When they built new churches they often chose the basilican plan—which was easy to construct and could be used in buildings of considerable size— adapting it to meet their needs. The building was oriented from east to west, with the entrance at the west end so as to

permit a gradual approach to the altar, which was given special emphasis by its situation in an apse added on at the east end of thechurch. The apse was usually semicircular, but sometimes triangular, as at Ballsh. The apse of the large basilica at Butrint, with a semicircular interior and a polygonal exterior, is the earliest example of a type which was much used thereafter. The central aisle or nave was usually wider than the lateral aisles, and probably also higher. At the west end there was usually a narthex, and sometimes also an exonarthex (as at Ballsh and Hekal A and B) and an atrium (Hekal A and B and Arapaj), round which were various secondary buildings, notably a baptistery. Part of the building was frequently used, either originally or later, as a funerary chapel.

The floor of the church was usually paved with mosaics or re-used stone slabs, as at Amantia. Sometimes parts of it were raised, like the iconostasis, as at Tepe and Amantia, or the apse, as in the church in the Paleokastër citadel. The aisles were separated by arches borne on columns or pilasters, often taken from older buildings, though the capitals might be new.

The walls were of stone, or sometimes in alternate courses of stone and brick. Their thickness varied according to the type of roof, whether timber or stone-vaulted. The windows were frequently double (Tepe, large basilica at Butrint) or sometimes triple (apse of large basilica). The central aisle sometimes had special lighting (Tepe, large basilica at Butrint) and sometimes had the only lighting (Amantia).

Aisleless churches

These are less numerous. Three types can be distinguished:

— At Tirana and Saranda: private houses of the 2nd-3rd century which were converted into churches in the 4th-5th century. The church at Tirana, which is better preserved, was given a raised semicircular apse and a narthex, both decorated with mosaics.

— At Paleokastër: same plan, with brick-paved floor and tiled roof. Dated to the 5th century, this seems to have served as a funerary church for the citadel.

— At Saranda: church of the Forty Martyrs, the last traces of which disappeared during the second world war. This church had an unusual plan, with a narthex larger than the nave, which had apses at the north and south ends.

Concentric plan

Only three buildings call for mention here—in order of importance the churches at Jerma and Lin and the baptistery at Butrint.

The Jerma church, small in size, consisted of a paved nave, probably with a timber roof, and a raised trefoil sanctuary. The three conches each had a mosaic floor and were roofed with a semi-dome. The church is thought to date from the late 5th or early 6th century.

The church at Lin, slightly later and much larger, has a more complex plan. The sanctuary has conches on the north and south sides and a semicircular apse and is flanked by two lateral aisles, two chapels with semicircular apses on the north side and a narthex, an atrium and a square baptistery on the south side. The church is paved with mosaics of excellent quality.

The Butrint baptistery, which is also dated to the 6th century and is probably contemporary with the large basilica, is the largest building of the kind in the whole Mediterranean basin. The interior is circular in form, with a square exterior and four small rooms at the corners. It is divided by columns into three concentric rings, with the baptismal font in the centre. The floor is paved with magnificent mosaics. Adjoining the baptistery is a building of similar size, probably slightly later in date, on an almost square plan and with mosaics of somewhat inferior quality.

ILLYRIANS AND ALBANIANS

There are practically no traces of buildings datable to between the 6th and 11th centuries, and written sources for this period are almost totally lacking. The Illyrians are mentioned for the last time in an early 7th century work, the *Miracles of St Demetrius*, and it is not until the beginning of the 12th century that Byzantine writers begin to refer to Albanians in central Albania.

It is known that of the barbarian tribes only the Slavs (and the Bulgars, soon assimilated to the Slavs) established lasting settlements of any size in the Balkans during this period. We have a list of these tribes, and it can be seen that although they settled in Dalmatia, Serbia, Bosnia, Herzegovina, Montenegro

and most of Macedonia as well as in Bulgaria they do not appear to have established themselves in Pravalitania or Epirus —i.e. broadly in the territory where the presence of Albanians is attested. It thus seems reasonable to accept that the Albanians of the present day have taken the name of the tribe mentioned by Ptolemy and represent those Illyrians who were not submerged by the incoming wave of Slavs.

This theory is not contradicted by linguistics; but practically nothing is known of the Illyrian language but a few personal and place names. The case must principally rest, therefore, on the evidence of archaeology.

The main argument is provided by the contents of a necropolis discovered in 1898 near Koman, in the Puka region. It was first reported by the French consul in Shkodra, M. Degrand, who sent a large collection of objects from the site to the National Museum of Antiquities in Saint-Germain-en-Laye. The evidence from Koman has been confirmed by other excavations at Kruja and Cape Rodon. It has thus been possible to gather a considerable body of information about the civilisation of northern Albania between the 7th and early 11th centuries, to which the name of the Koman culture has been given.

The Koman necropolis (named after a village which has now disappeared) has yielded numbers of stone sarcophagi, some of which have Greek inscriptions enabling them to be dated. Most of the objects found are of bronze or iron, but there are some silver and glass items. There is little pottery. The objects consist mainly of tools and implements and jewellery for both men and women. The jewellery, sometimes in filigree work, is usually decorated with patterns which are also strikingly similar to Illyrian ornaments.

It was long thought that this civilisation was peculiar to northern Albania, Kosovo and Montenegro, but recent excavations in tumuli in southern Albania have yielded similar archaeological material.

Both in northern and southern Albania this type of material disappears in the 11th century. Apart from its own intrinsic interest, however, it has provided some of the links missing in the chain connecting the Illyrians with the Albanians.

BYZANTINE RELIGIOUS ARCHITECTURE

The religious buildings of the period between the 11th and 15th centuries can be considered in two stages: first those of southern Albania, of Byzantine type, and then those (fewer in number) in the northern part of the country, in which western influence can be detected. For the Byzantine churches the classification adopted in a previous section will be used: i.e. the basilican type, the aisleless church and the centralised plan.

The only well preserved basilica is St Nicholas's church, Perondi. The aisled nave, choir and apse and the narthex were built in the 11th century. The nave, which was higher than the aisles, had three side windows and a window above the narthex. In the 13th and 14th centuries the bell-tower was added and the narthex and aisles were heightened in cloisonné masonry (i.e. with small stone blocks framed in bricks). The walls are of brick and stone, the roof of timber. The interior is decorated with frescoes.

The aisleless churches are characterised by smaller size and an apse narrower than the nave, with a semicircular interior and a triangular exterior. The walls, usually windowless, are of brick and stone.

The church of the Transfiguration at Herbel, near Peshkopi, which is dated to the 12th or 13th century, is the most northerly example of the Byzantine style in Albania. This tiny church now serves as the apse of a later building. The roughly contemporary church of St Parasceva at Sop has a single entrance on the north side and a substructure re-using ancient masonry.

The church of St Nicholas at Armen is divided into three parts by pilasters, the central part being roofed by an oval dome covered with tiles and the other parts with round-arched vaulting.

The domed cruciform churches are by far the commonest type. Some of them have a Latin-cross plan, like the church at Marmiro (near Orikum), with thick stone walls and a doorway in each arm of the cross, the main doorway opening off a narthex which is now almost totally destroyed. This church, rather primitive in style, is dated to not later than the 13th century. Another fine example of the type, of slightly later date, is St Mary's church at Zvërnec.

Most of the domed churches, however, are on a Greek cross plan, and these offer the finest examples of the architecture of

the period. The oldest of these churches—St Mary's at Upper Peshkopi and St Mary's at Kosina—are dated to the 12th century. They are both stone-built and roofed with stone slabs. The drum bearing the low dome is of some height, and a cornice runs round the dome as well as the top of the walls.

The church of St Mary at Pojan, the site of *Apollonia*, has a number of distinctive features. In plan it is a parallelogram, and in consequence the dome and its drum are slightly oval; and there is an unusual space between the eastern arm of the transept and the apse. Western influence can also be seen in the carving of the capitals. The church is dated to the midlde of the 13th century.

Interesting influences can also be noted in St Mary's church at Labova i Kryqit. Curiously, the dome and the drum have a slight lean. The dome, which is unusually high, is borne on two orders of columns, producing a structure with false galleries like that of St Sophia in Salonica and the Gül Camii in Istanbul. The church is thought to date from the 13th century, the heyday of the despotate of Epirus.

The 13th and 14th centuries were a period of prosperity for Berat, reflected in the construction, in the upper town, of three interesting churches: St Mary of Blachernae, Holy Trinity (probably rather later) and the chapel of St Michael, perched on a steep slope outside the walls of the citadel. Built in cloisonné masonry, they show how this technique developed in the course of the century—a development which can also be seen in the church of the Resurrection at Mborje, which is dated to 1389.

Finally there are two churches which have lost their original concentric plan—St Nicholas's at Kurjan, in which the dome and drum, the supports of which still remain, have been replaced by a pitched roof, and the beautiful church of St Nicholas at Mesopotam, which originally had two aisles roofed by four domes borne on drums, a narthex roofed by three spherical domes and a double apse.

The churches of northern and central Albania are, in general, less well preserved. Most of them are aisleless, elongated in plan, with a semicircular apse and a bell-tower. The church of SS. Sergius and Bacchus at Shirgj and St Mary's at Kruja, however, are of basilican type. In most cases dressed stone is used only at the corners and in window and door frames, the walls being built of roughly coursed rubble. Few churches

show the careful craftsmanship seen in the apse of St Mary's church at Rubik or the arches of the church at Cape Rodon. The roofs of these churches are vaulted in areas where western influence is most evident (Vau i Dejës, Rodon, Rubik), of timber elsewhere. In general the churches were somewhat severe in aspect, but efforts were made to brighten up the interior with frescoes, which are sometimes of considerable quality, as at Vau i Dejës.

This account of the medieval religious buildings of Albania may conclude with a few words on the monasteries, few traces of which have survived. Mention need be made only of St Mary's monastery at Pojan, which has preserved parts of its original enclosing wall and a large cistern in the exonarthex of the church. The most interesting of the monastic buildings, however, is the refectory, which dates from the late 13th or early 14th century and is now incorporated in later buildings. The apse is decorated with excellent frescoes dating from the period of construction.

POST-BYZANTINE RELIGIOUS ARCHITECTURE

The Turkish conquest led to much destruction, and in addition many churches were converted into mosques. The urgent task, therefore, was one of rebuilding: examples of this are the churches of St Nicholas at Shelcan (1551), St Nicholas at Kurjan (1570) and St Mary of Blachernae in the Berat citadel (1578).

New building was soon resumed, and until the end of the 18th century numbers of churches of some architectural quality were erected in sufficient numbers to meet the country's needs. In the 19th century, however, inspiration seems to have failed.

The same classification will be used as in earlier sections, but the basilican churches—the latest, and often the most interesting—will be considered last, after aisleless churches and churches on a centralised plan.

Aisleless churches

The aisleless churches can be further subdivided into a number of types according to the form of their roof. The main distinction is between timber-roofed, barrel-vaulted and domed churches.

The timber-roofed churches are small, usually with a very bare exterior, which may be compensated for by frescoes in the interior. Examples are the churches of St Parasceva at Valsh, St Athanasius at Peca, St George at Upper Leshnica, St Demetrius at Poliçan, the Saviour at Tremisht and St Demetrius and SS. Constantine and Helen in the Berat citadel.

In barrel-vaulted churches the round-arched vaulting running the length of the church is relieved by pilasters and transverse arches. The most important church of this type is St Anne's at Derviçan (16th century), which has a fine stone iconostasis.

Examples of domed churches are the church at Catista, St Mary's at Vithkuq and St George's at Dema, perhaps the finest of the type, with a dome borne on triple arches which is unique in Albania.

Churches on a centralised plan

The central-plan churches of the post-Byzantine period are in general much more carefully built than the aisleless churches. They are usually monastic churches. Seen from the outside, their pitched roofs give them something of the appearance of the domed basilicas. To this category belong the churches of St Mary at Zervat (1509), St Mary at Keromeno (1580), St Cyriac at Dhuvjan (1588), St Mary at Krorëx (1672), Holy Trinity at Pepel (1750) and the beautiful church of the monastery of the Gospel at Vanishtë (1582), which is particularly notable for the ornamentation of the apses.

Basilicas

These reached their apogee in the 18th century. They may have a domed roof, like the churches of St Mary at Vllaho-Goranxi and St Athanasius at Poliçan, or a combination of vaulting and spherical domes (a type found particularly in the Korça region), or a flat roof, notably in the Myzeqe area.

There are a fair number of remains of monasteries of this period, like those at Kakome and Ardenica, both situated on hills.

MOSLEM RELIGIOUS BUILDINGS

As already noted, some churches were converted into mosques when Albania fell into Moslem hands; but the Turks soon began to build new places of worship. These were usually

required to meet the needs of their garrisons, and it is not surprising, therefore, that the oldest mosque in Albania, the *Xhamija Mbret* (King's Mosque), built at Elbasan in 1492, is situated within the citadel.

The *Xhamija Mbret* at Berat dates from about the same period, as do the ruined mosques in the citadel.

The Bazaar Mosque in Kruja, built 1533-34, has a porch and a timber ceiling. Its minaret of carved stone is polygonal, on a square base. The *Xhamija e Beqarëve* (Bachelors' Mosque) in Berat, which is much later, has a similar plan.

The *Xhamija e Mirahorit* (Equerry's Mosque) was built in 1496 by Iljaz Bey, former equerry to Mehmet II. Modelled on the *Yeşil Cami* (1378-92) in Izmir and the *Firuz Ağa Camii* (1491) in Istanbul, it was the first domed mosque built in Albania.

The Equerry's Mosque influenced the builders of the *Xhamija e Plombit* (Lead Mosque) in Berat, which dates from 1533-34, and the *Xhamija e Muradies* (Murad's Mosque) of 1542.

The Lead Mosque in Shkodra, built by Pasha Mustafa Bushatli in 1773-74, is an isolated case. In size, complexity of plan and quality of execution it has affinities with the great mosques of Istanbul.

The Mosque of Etem Bey in Tirana, begun in 1794 but completed only in 1821, is of medium size. Related to it are two roughly contemporary mosques, at Peqin and Kavaja, which show close affinities with one another; both have arcaded porticoes and clock-towers *(kulla e sahatit)*.

Finally mention must be made of another type of Moslem religious building—the *tyrbes* (funerary monuments), which are of considerable artistic interest. Notable examples are the one at Poloska (near Korça), the oldest in Albania (late 15th or early 16th century), and the slightly later *Tyrbja e Nuses* (Tyrbe of the Bride) at Mullet, near Tirana. The most interesting, however, is the tyrbe of Kaplan Pasha in Tirana (early 19th century).

ETHNOGRAPHY

THE ALBANIAN CHARACTER

No account of the way of life and the culture of the Albanians would be complete without mention of a characteristic which—though not strictly a matter of ethnology—is of central importance in their attitude to life: their hospitality.

It is natural, of course, that in a country of rugged mountains and harsh climate the attitude to travellers should be one of hospitality and fraternal welcome, seen as prime human obligations. In Albania, however, this virtue—which is of course shared by many other peoples—is more than a formal pattern of behaviour, more than a conventional conviviality: it is the national virtue, an essential feature of all traditional codes, the first duty of all Albanians, whether workers, members of an agricultural cooperative, intellectuals or politicians. Even today, with the development of communications, the general assurance of security, the improvement in the standard of living and the increase in density of population, hospitality to any stranger remains a duty. The Albanians believe that since the stranger has made an effort to come he must be received with all possible consideration, and above all as a friend. The oft-told tale of a peasant condemned to death by a cruel bey who, asked at the moment of execution what was his greatest regret in life, replied that it was his failure to be sufficiently hospitable to a visitor, reflects a reality which is deeply felt by all Albanians, a reality which every visitor may encounter anywhere and at any time. Whether an official visitor or an ordinary tourist, meeting Albanians in towns and villages or on the road, you will find them always smiling and friendly, without either subservience or thought of personal gain.

This cordiality is put into practice in all the activities of daily life in the society of the present day as it was in the past. Occasions for celebration or rejoicing are always the pretext for family parties or gatherings of friends and work-mates.

FOLK TRADITIONS

In the life of all Albanians there are many occasions for bringing together the members of families who may have been separated by movements of population resulting from the

development of the country: births, engagements, marriages and funerals, of course, but also birthdays, success in an examination, promotion in one's job, the return of a soldier from military service. On any such occasion the fatted calf will be killed and a feast will be prepared, using old recipes which are no longer appropriate to everyday life but which have never been forgotten.

In a society much divided by religion the friendships established in the course of a working life, the new relationships acquired by marriage and the memory of difficulties shared have created bonds as strong as those of blood. The customary institutions which have enabled very different communities to live harmoniously together for many centuries have left a deep and beneficial mark on the way of life of the Albanians, and it is probably this that explains the warmth of their hospitality. Any of these celebrations, and particularly a wedding, may bring the passing stranger an unforgettable experience as the recipient of this ready welcome. He may be lucky enough to see a traditional wedding procession, carrying the bride's trousseau and wedding presents, with the bride herself riding in state, followed by musicians and the bridal attendants.

Although subject for many centuries to Turkish occupation, the Albanians nevertheless contrived in the remoter parts of the country to live under a system of customary law (*kanun*) which was untouched by Islamic law. This code was not everywhere the same, and there were considerable regional differences, but one feature found everywhere was the importance of the pledged word (*besa*). Once a man gave his word his first duty was the protection due to a guest. (This is the source of the feeling of hospitality which is so profoundly rooted in the Albanian character).

FOLK ART

The long period of Turkish occupation hampered the development of art in many fields, particularly in monumental architecture. Artistic aspirations were limited to the decorative and minor arts like textiles, costume, the decoration of small objects, jewellery and interior decoration.

A tradition inherited from the Middle Ages, however, enabled the older techniques and know-how in art and architecture to be preserved. Master carpenters and wood-carvers, masons and stone-cutters, blacksmiths and silversmiths left the country

and carried their skills farther afield, particularly to Istanbul. Travelling in teams of seven or eight craftsmen, they left the Mokra, Çermenika and Dibër areas to work wherever work was available; and these craftsmen and artists who found no scope for their skills at home built mosques and churches in other countries.

The craft of wood-carving, highly developed in Albania, was still practised in the interior decoration of the houses of the well-to-do, and in various house-museums visitors can still see many examples of ceilings and woodwork carved with geometric and vegetable ornament.

Peasant art found expression in objects of everyday use, usually of wood, while for lack of the necessary technical skills pottery remained on a purely utilitarian level. But the artistic aspirations thus repressed found scope for expression in costume and in music and dancing, highly diversified arts which have now come back into favour.

MUSIC

Folk traditions and oral literature have always been vigorous in Albania, and, with music coming to their support, it is in this field that traditional Albanian culture has found its most magnificent expression.

Within the last thirty years the work of scholars and musicologists has brought to light a great treasury of musical texts: a treasury which had enabled an oppressed people to preserve and perpetuate their national values, whether in the form of proverbs and popular adages, fables and fabliaux, love songs and above all epic songs recounting historical events transformed by the passage of time. These texts emphasised all the elements of the national character—valour, daring, the spirit of sacrifice, a hatred of oppression and a boundless love of country and of freedom.

The heroic cycle (*kreshnik*) consists of chansons de geste dating from the early medieval period. These lays were handed down to the present day by country minstrels and bards, able to chant thousands of verses, accompanying themselves on a one-stringed vielle (*lahuta*) in the north of the country; in the south the lays were sung by three singers, one of them taking the bass accompaniment. In these tales the heroes were aided by mythical beings and fairies (*zane* and *öre*) who might be

beneficent or admonitory as circumstances required, in a fantastic world which during the centuries of oppression fostered the wildest dreams of honour and victory.

The love songs are very similar to the songs of the medieval troubadours of western Europe, glorifying the singer's "lady" or "fair one" (Albanian *mike*).

In our own time contemporary historical events are still, in the Albanian phrase, "put into song". Thus episodes in the Resistance during the last war and the deeds of the great figures of that period are recounted to the same music and in the same literary style as the struggle against Turkish oppression. In recent years young people have shown the same creative dynamism in celebrating the great achievements which have changed the face of the country, like the dams and the technological innovations which have brought increased wellbeing.

All over the country there are groups dedicated to carrying on the traditions of folk music and dancing transmitted and authenticated by the older generation. Large gatherings of folk groups are officially organised, the most prestigious being the Folk Festival which has been held at Gjirokastër every five years since 1968. In preparation for this festival teams of ethnologists and musicologists spend more than a year travelling about the country to select the best groups, having regard not only to their musical and poetic qualities but also to the authenticity of their costumes. During the festival, which lasts a week, buses full of young people converge on the town, and after it travel round all the different regions: for those who have won prizes it is a kind of triumphal progress. The winners are chosen by a jury of artists, musicians, writers and representatives of radio and television, the theatre and the dance —who often find personal inspiration in the festival performances.

COSTUME

Although Albania is one of the few European countries in which traditional costumes were still worn until the second world war, visitors will now encounter few people still wearing the old costumes. All local museums, however, have displays of the traditional costumes of the region, and museums in the larger towns, particularly Tirana, show a large cross-section of regional types. Festivals of folk music and dancing by amateur groups, like the Folk Festival in Gjirokastër and other

lesser events, provide opportunities of seeing authentic costumes brought out of store for the occasion. It is still possible, however, to come across people, old or not so old, who still preserve the garments made for their trousseau—a trousseau which included costumes appropriate for all circumstances and all stages of life. They may keep these garments for economic reasons, or perhaps from force of habit: they are reluctant to make a sudden change, and for everyday work, particularly in the fields, their old clothes are more comfortable. Young people, of course, can buy factory-made textiles; they no longer do their own weaving, and prefer the novelty of a different way of life. In spite of this change, however, women can still be seen wearing trousers under a little cotton dress and kerchiefs tied in the traditional way.

In some parts of the country which are more conservative or more concerned to preserve their identity girls are still married in traditional costume, either made for the occasion or taken from their mother's or grandmother's trousseau, and old women attending a wedding put on their own wedding garments, which they consider more sumptuous, in order to do honour to the younger generation. And old traditional costumes, carefully preserved in chests, are brought out and worn on the occasion of dance festivals organised by agricultural cooperatives or factories or at regional or inter-regional festivals.

Albania's complicated relief pattern divides its territory into a patchwork of regions of varying size, with populations which for many centuries lived in relative isolation. Only the towns, the markets and religious pilgrimages provided opportunities of meeting and getting to know other people, and each population group, depending on its origins, its workaday activities and its religion, jealously preserved its distinctive costume. Geography and climate played a part in this, but only a part: the people of the mountains needed warm woollen clothing, while the plain-dwellers, with their milder climate, preferred cooler garments of linen or cotton. This was the case, for example, in the Catholic communities centred on the large town of Shkodra, where they met regularly but wore totally different costumes and colours: the shepherds of the upland regions wore garments of rough homespun wool, white or more usually black, while the market gardeners of the plain preferred white and red cotton. Within the plain, however, the juxtaposition of different religions contributed to the divergences. The Catholic farmers and market gardeners wore

quite different costumes from their Moslem neighbours in spite of their similar way of life. The shops in the Shkodra bazaar offered a wide range of fabrics and vestimentary accessories, either locally made or imported, from which each community made a precise selection designed to accentuate their differences.

Although many of these small areas, living in a closed economy, seemed to have little communication with the outside world the men did move from place to place, either with transhumant flocks and herds or in the quest for work. Perhaps because of this, the costumes of the men showed more uniformity and some types were found over larger areas than those of the women, which were made at home and changed more slowly. The men who left home to work abroad were able to buy and bring home manufactured textile products, new to their village and therefore more highly prized. Thus fine cloths, velvets, beads, spangles, gold braid and other gold threads found their way into the country regions, either as gifts or as adornments for a bride.

Something like fifty different types of costume have been identified in Albania. Ethnographical studies really began only after the second world war, so that Albanian ethnologists, as their investigations extend into the remoter parts of the country, are still discovering types of costume not previously described.

The costumes of townspeople, still generally worn at the end of the 18th century and thereafter until their gradual disappearance about the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, impressed foreign visitors with their magnificence. Byron noted that the Albanians dressed like princes. The towns, few in number, lay on trade routes between east and west and in earlier days had enjoyed great prosperity; and they were the place of residence of the feudal landowners and the officials of the Ottoman administration.

These costumes reflected the oriental way of life, with some specifically Balkan features, led by the wealthy class in the towns. The men wore the *fustan* (fustanella), a pleated kilt of white linen or cotton which varied in length and in fullness. (It was also worn in country areas: see below). Social and religious status was indicated by the associated garments—waistcoats, jackets, leggings, cloaks. These items were of fine cloth or velvet, embroidered all over with gold and silver thread and ornamented with silk braid. The accessories—chains,

watches, weapons—were of chased silver with niello decoration, covered with filigree ornament and sometimes gilded or garnished with gold.

The women, whether Catholic, Moslem or Orthodox, were richly dressed. When they went out they were shrouded in veils and large cloaks, which revealed their baggy Turkish trousers underneath. These too were of rich fabrics—white organdie in Tirana, fine wool muslin or flowered cotton in Shkodra. Home-produced silk from cocoons supplied the material for shifts, veils and embroidery thread, and even domestic linen, sheets or ceremonial towels. Specialised women weavers worked to order, at home or in their customer's home, producing fabrics that were marvels of delicacy and imagination. The same fabrics and the same gold embroideries were used for the long dresses fashionable in Berat, but also for cloaks (*xhube*), with or without sleeves, bodices (*jekel*) and trousers. The gold embroidery used to adorn both men's and women's garments was produced by specialised craft workers, who were always men. Many specimens of their work can be seen in museums, and visitors will be astonished by the quality of this work, still preserved intact, which reflects the oriental splendour of a past age.

For the less prosperous townspeople, as for country-dwellers and the majority of the population, the materials used in making clothes—wool, silk, cotton or linen, varying from region to region—were home-produced. The tradition is still so much alive that many women are still able, like their grandmothers before them, to work with textiles; they know the secrets of dyeing and the meticulous spinning of carefully selected fibres, and have not forgotten the art of delicate weaving and embroidery. Their labour, their ingenuity and their creativity can still produce work as fine as the expensive products of town craftsmen.

Male costume showed less local variety. It could be classified, however, in five main groups, though with some overlapping: the pleated kilt or fustanella (*fustan*), worn with breeches; the long shirt and cloak (*dollam*), close-fitting at the waist, also worn with breeches; the tight trousers (*tirq*) of white homespun wool, with black braiding; the slightly baggy trousers (*brekësh*) of fine wool or linen; and the wide knee-length trousers (*poture*) of dark-coloured cloth or homespun.

On their feet they wore knitted woollen socks and cowhide sandals, pulled tight through turned-over hems varying in form from region to region. Sometimes, particularly in the stony

regions of the south, the sandals had heavily nailed soles and heels.

The shirt worn over the *fustan* had wide sleeves, under which could be seen the close-fitting sleeves of a knitted undervest or knitted woollen cuffs. The *fustan*, found all over the country from north to south, was probably of very ancient origin, and was taken to Italy by the Albanians who emigrated there in the 15th century. The waistcoats were of white homespun wool with black braiding in the extreme north and of blue homespun in the Myzeqe plain. Jackets of varying length in thick black homespun, sometimes with sleeves extending only to the elbow, with hoods, pompoms and braiding (*kaporane*), were found all over northern and central Albania. The *tirq*, a garment well adapted to pastoral life, was worn in many areas, alternating according to season with the *fustan* and the long shirt. Baggy trousers were worn in the less cold areas. Wide trousers worn with leggings were found mainly in the coastal regions and in the south.

The *qeleshe*, the white felt cap worn by men, was a distinctively Albanian type of headgear both within the country and beyond its frontiers. Among the mountain people of the north it was hemispherical in form; at Kukës in the form of a truncated cone; in Tirana, in the Mirditë country and the Mat region either with an indented top or completely flat; and in southern Albania tall and soft. In the plains, for example in the Myzeqe area, a finely made white piqué cotton cap was preferred. Sometimes a scarf of white or red flowered cotton might be added, folded in two and tied on the forehead.

Women's costumes were extremely varied, but can be classified in five main groups, with various sub-groups and subtle local variants: a dress of black homespun wool (*xhublete*) in the mountains of the north; a shift and apron, commonly worn in a large area traversing Albania from east to west; a shift with two aprons in the north-east; a bodice and skirt (reflecting town influence) in the centre and south; and baggy trousers (*brekëshe*), less common but found round Tirana, Elbasan, Librazhd and Mat. All these costumes had aprons of varying length. On their heads the women wore a broad band tied in a knot or a kerchief over a coif completely enclosing the hair or showing only a few tufts of hair on the temples. Drawers were of white linen, stockings knitted of multi-coloured wool. Women's sandals, of puckered leather, were similar to those worn by men.

Special mention must be made of the black dress (*xhublete*) which was worn only in the mountain country north of Shkodra: undoubtedly the most striking in Albania, and probably in the whole of Europe. It seems highly archaic in form, in spite of its very sophisticated composition; and certainly, when worn by sturdy mountain women, cannot fail to attract attention. The skirt, made of rough black homespun, has a number of wide gores at the back, with edgings of white homespun. Formerly—but the fashion has now changed—it was worn with a short skirted jacket with narrow gores in the back and sleeves ending in a point on the hand, a waistcoat ending in a point and fringes over the shoulders. Over the skirt was worn a wide apron. The whole ensemble, entirely in black, was relieved by touches of black or dark red velvet, black beads or gold thread. The hieratic elegance of this costume was enhanced by jewellery and particularly by a large cross in filigree work.

In the far south, round Gjirokastër, archaic features can still be found, in spite of the use of fine fabrics like imported cloth or velvet: for example a long cloak with sleeves ending over the hand in a rounded flap. In the Mirditë area women can still be seen wearing the costume of the so-called "white" area, with a pleated skirt and a red belt decorated with pompoms. Finally there is the type of costume with two aprons which visitors may be fortunate enough to see on some special occasion or festival in the Kukës area: this sometimes consists of a linen shift with reddish-brown stripes and two aprons, one in front and one behind, both of rough black homespun decorated with braiding and gold threads.

TEXTILES AND CARPETS

The craft of textile-making in Albania is traditionally in the hands of the housewife, in towns as well as in the country. Every house used to have, and still has, a weaving loom in a room near the kitchen. The women in towns, for example in Berat, used to rear silkworms, which during the season were given the best place in the house to protect them against cold weather. At Shkodra the home manufacture of silk was common both in the town and the surrounding countryside. Linen and cotton have also long been grown and used for making clothes. The most widely used material, however, was wool. Albania is a country of great flocks of sheep and goats; and the sheep is a much venerated animal of which no one may say ill, for

it gives man its wool, its milk and its meat. There is a whole culture of wool. Wool from different breeds is selected for different purposes. Sheep with long and delicate fleece, of the breed called *rude*, yield a light, fluffy wool, particularly at the autumn shearing after the flocks return from their summer pastures, and this is used to produce textiles for clothing. Wool from sheep of the breed called *i ashpër*, with shorter and harder fibres, is used in making hand-knotted carpets and mixed with goats' wool for blankets. The wool of russet-coloured goats is also favoured for the weaving of blankets and carpets. The method of preparing the wool and colouring it with vegetable or chemical dyes is still generally known. In the past the comfort of a house, either in town or in the country, often depended on carpets, blankets and cushions; and a bride must still have in her trousseau one or more carpets and blankets, and she will also give her mother-in-law a carpet. If she does not know how to weave it herself, or has not time, she will have it made by her mother or will buy it in one of the state shops selling the woven carpets called *qilims*.

Fullers were available everywhere to treat home-produced textiles. Rough homespun was compacted in fulling-mills, while vats under a waterfall were used to make carpets and blankets supple and slightly felted —either the *plaf*, with long fibres, or the *velenxe*, with a mixture of goats' and sheep's wool which produced thick blankets. The *sexhade* is a hand-knotted carpet, the technique of making which was learned in some parts of the country from carpets brought from the East and seen in mosques. In home workshops the knotted carpets are worked horizontally: it is only in the state carpet cooperative that the methods and patterns of the East are adopted. These products, in attractive colours, are good imitations of Persian carpets and of excellent quality.

The discussion of folk arts and crafts can be completed with a mention of the various kinds of furniture produced all over the country—e.g. chests of painted or carved wood, cradles and chairs. They are now gradually disappearing, but craftsmen able to make them are still sometimes found in state enterprises like the *Migjeni* factory in Tirana, where there are also still coppersmiths making coffee-pots, coffee-mills and other kitchen utensils.

HOUSES

Since 1961, when two towns, Berat and Gjirokastër, were declared museum towns, much effort has been devoted to preserving and restoring old houses of traditional type. There has been much new building in Albania during the last thirty years and, as in other countries, the older towns have been surrounded by blocks of flats. Country people, however, do not like living in flats, though these are also found in agricultural cooperatives. Thus individual houses are built throughout the area of the commune according to requirements. People can build their own house with materials supplied by state cooperatives, with help from their neighbours—a practice well established in the past.

The new dwellings are surrounded by gardens gay with flowers, usually roses, and might well be taken for older houses. The traditional types of house, however, are quite different and very varied, using whatever resources are available in the area. In the south they are built in stone and roofed with stone; in the plains of stone, rubble, daub or clapboard; in reclaimed marshland areas of rammed earth. In well-wooded mountain areas the houses have an upper storey of timber over a stone basement and are roofed with shingles. Often there is a large tiled roof with a full metre's overhang to protect the fragile walls from rain. In many parts of the country, for example in the north and in the Mirditë and Mat areas, the houses were fortified, either by adding one or more towers or by adopting a kind of tower house plan, either square or rectangular. The ground floor of the house is occupied by the livestock and by store-rooms with supplies of food for man and beast. The floor above this contains a living room and two or three bedrooms; and above this again there may be an additional floor, often built of wood, with a room for guests and storage for bed-linen and spare carpets.

This vertical arrangement can also be found in towns, for example in houses built on a steep slope, as at Gjirokastër. There a large house will have cellars for storage of various kinds, a floor for the kitchen and the domestic staff, another floor for the men's reception rooms and another for the women, with wide bay-windows.

Both in the country and in towns the houses might have an overhanging belvedere or lookout, the *qoshk*, an extension of the living room, sometimes slightly raised and approached by

steps. The living room (*shtëpia e zjarrit*) had a fireplace set into the outer wall, slightly raised. Domestic utensils were kept in recesses or hung on the walls; the low table (*sofra*) was similarly stored out of the way after meals. Mattresses and blankets were kept in a corner and brought out at night. Round the fireplace was a bench covered with rugs and carpets where the family could sit during the day.

In many parts of the country the roofs are hipped and covered with tiles. In towns like Berat, Elbasan and Korça the houses are surrounded by a wall and are entered by a double door leading into a courtyard full of flowers, with a well and a tiny garden. The more opulent houses of Shkodra or Berat and in the country have a large roofed balcony (*çardak*)—occupying a corner of the house, in the centre or extending along the whole façade—on which the family could sleep during the summer, receive guests or perform various domestic tasks.

Many houses which belonged to notable figures or were the scene of important events are now museums, in which visitors can get some impression of the way of life of earlier times.

LITERATURE

The Albanian language was written from the beginning of the 14th century, but the earliest texts we possess date only from the second half of the 15th. They consist of a few sentences of a religious nature and a small vocabulary compiled by a German pilgrim.

GEG AND TOSK

The first work which has come down to us in a reasonably complete form was printed in 1554-55. This is a *Liturgy* in Geg, the northern dialect of Albanian, written by a priest named Gjon Buzuku. It is printed in Roman type, with some additional characters based on the Cyrillic alphabet to represent sounds not found in Latin. The work is mainly of linguistic interest: in particular it shows that at that period the northern and southern dialects were less differentiated than they later became.

We have another 16th century work, also written by a priest, Luke Matrënga, a member of a family from Himara which had settled in Palermo. Published in Rome in 1592 under the title *E mbsuame e chraesterae* ("Christian Doctrine"), this is a translation into the southern dialect, Tosk, of a Latin catechism written by a Spanish Jesuit named Ledesma. This very brief work, printed in Roman type, confirms the evidence of the Geg missal about the differentiation of the two dialects.

In the following century three Catholic bishops, originally from northern Albania but educated in Italy, translated a number of works from Latin into Geg, using a notation similar to that used by Buzuku. Among the texts they translated were a work on Skanderbeg and a Latin-Albanian dictionary of some 5000 words, published in 1635—the first work of Albanian lexicography.

In 1685 Pjetër Bogdani (1625-89), bishop of Shkodra and later of Skoplje, then living in exile in Padua, wrote a bilingual work in Latin and Albanian, *Cuneus prophetarum*, on the creation of the world, the lives of the prophets and the life of Christ. This, the first original prose work in Albanian literature, shows a more flexible and richer language than the earlier writings.

TOSK WRITING IN ARABIC CHARACTERS

The literature of the 18th century is of a very different character. Geg writing now disappears almost completely. The only name to note is that of Jul Variboba (1724-88), whose collection of poems *Ghiella es muriis virghiur* ("Life of the Virgin Mary") was printed at Rome in 1762.

Most of the writers of this period were Albanian Moslems using the Tosk dialect but writing in Arabic characters. They thus inaugurated a literary fashion which continued well into the 19th century with the Bektashis (members of a Moslem sect) Dalip and Shahin Frashëri, authors of two interminable religious poems, *Hadekaja* (65,000 lines) and *Muhternamela* (12,000 verses). It persisted into the 20th century in Kosovo, where Hilmi Maliqi-Rahovect (1865-1928) wrote a *Divan* which is not without merit.

Their predecessors had been:

— Nezim Frakulla, scion of a noble family of Berat, who died in Istanbul in 1760 after an eventful life. Apart from works written in Turkish, Persian and Arabic, he was the author of a *Divan* and many other isolated works in Albanian.

— Hasan Zyko Kambery, who lived at Kolonja and in 1789 served under Ali Pasha. He was the author of *Mevlud*, a collection of religious poems in Albanian, and of some fifty lyric poems.

— Muhamet Kyçyku (1784-1844), a native of Konispoli who lived for ten years in Cairo and then returned to his village as a hodja (teacher). His principal works, *Isufi dhe Zelihaja* ("Joseph and Zeliha") and *Erveheja*, are verse novels, with intricate plots in which love and virtue are in the end triumphant.

THE RILINDJA

This literature of Oriental inspiration was too alien to Albanian national traditions, and the 19th century was the age of the *Rilindja* (Renaissance), a reaffirmation of those traditions. In Albania as elsewhere in the Ottoman empire this revival of national aspirations was the work of patriots active in both the political and the literary fields, closely associating the conquest of political rights with the achievement of teaching in the national language.

The starting point of this period of Albanian history and literature is usually taken as the year 1839, when Sultan Abdul Majid, in the edict known as the *Hatt-i-Sherif* of Gülhane, promulgated the *Tanzimat*, a reforming policy of centralisation. The opposition to this policy was one of the first manifestations of the Albanian national renaissance. The end point of the period is 1912, when Albania achieved national independence.

The three Frashëri brothers, members of a family of Bektashi beys from southern Albania, were the leading figures in the Rilindja, contributing to all its various aspects. Abdyl (1839-92) was mainly active in politics; Sami (1850-1904) was a scholar; Naim (1846-1900) was mainly a poet, the greatest of his time and perhaps in all Albanian literature.

In *Bagëti e bujqësi* ("Bucolics and Georgics"), published in 1886, Naim Frashëri celebrated the beauties of his native country, and his collection of poems *Lulet e veresë* ("Flowers of Summer", 1890) reflected the same inspiration. His *Parajsa dhe fjala fluturake* ("Paradise and Fugitive Words") and the long epic peom *Istori e Skënderbeut* ("History of Skanderbeg") are primarily patriotic works. Also of importance are his love poems (*Bukuri*, "Beauty"), his religious poems (*Qerbela*) and his philosophical poems (*Përendia*, "The Eternal").

Other notable names of the Rilindja are Ndre Mjedja (1866-1937), a Catholic priest from Shkodra, and Andon Zako Çajupi (1866-1930), a poet of socialist and irreligious inspiration. His collection of poems *Baba Tomorri* ("Old Father Tomorr"), published in 1902, attracted great interest and acclaim. Another prominent figure was Luigj Gurakuqi (1879-1925), author of the first Albanian treatise on versification.

The poets Filip Shiroka (1859-1935) and Asdreni (1874-1947) form, chronologically, a transition between the Rilindja and the following period. Shiroka's spontaneity and lyricism present a picture of his native country which is sometimes a little over-idealised, while Asdreni's work is marked by a pessimism mainly inspired by the end of democracy in Albania and in the Balkans generally.

The Albanians living in Italy (the *Arbëresh*) did not remain inactive, and the writings of Geronimo de Rada (1814-1903) covered almost the whole of the period. His most important work is *Skanderbeku i pafan* ("The Unfortunate Skanderbeg"), an epic in twelve books, which was not published in full until 1896, after he had worked on it for more than half a century.

In spite of its *longueurs* and a frequently declamatory tone it shows undeniable epic power in its presentation of 15th century Albania and its resistance to the Turkish hordes.

The writers of the Rilindja were mostly well educated, and the conditions of life in Albania compelled them to pursue their studies in foreign languages. Many of them, therefore, wrote in other languages: Naim Frashëri, for example, wrote in Greek, Sami Frashëri in Turkish, Serembe in Italian. Pasco Wassa (1825-92), a Catholic from Shkodra, an Albanian patriot and a high official, used Italian in his collection of poems *Rose e spine* ("Roses and Thorns") and French for his novel *Blanche de Temal*, the first novel written by an Albanian, which gives a most interesting description of northern Albania in the middle of the 19th century. Pasco Wassa is best known, however, as the author of the patriotic poem *O moy Shqypni, e mjera Shqypni!* ("O poor Albania!"). Written in 1880, when the Albanians were seeking to resist the losses of territory imposed under the treaty of Berlin, it immediately became popular and has remained so ever since.

The cultural life which had been interrupted during the first world war was actively resumed in the 1920s. Albanian intellectuals sought to defend their country abroad, gave fresh life to the cultural societies and founded new journals, like *Flaga* ("The Flame), *Rilindja* ("Renaissance") and *Bota e re* ("New World").

Notable among this new generation of writers was Fan Stilian Noli. In a style which is often epic and sometimes fiercely critical he deals not only with the deeds of the great Albanian patriots (*Shpellë Dragobisë*, "The Dragobi Cave"; *Syrgjyn vdekur*, "Death of an Outlaw") but with the political situation, taking as his starting point Biblical figures (*Marshi i Barabbajt*, "Barabbas's Walk"; *Krishti me kamçikun*, "Christ with the Riding Whip"), characters from antiquity (*Rent or Marathonomak*, "The Messenger of Marathon") or the ruling classes of his day (*Kënga e Salep-sulltanit*, "The Song of Salep Sultan"). His translations of Cervantes, Edgar Allan Poe, Ibsen, Omar Khayyam and above all Shakespeare are accepted as models of their kind.

THE PROGRESSIVE TREND

The 1930s saw the emergence of a progressive or democratic trend. Literature was now less interested in the traditional themes and more concerned with social matters. The main representa-

tive of this school was Migjeni (1911-38), the child prodigy of Albanian literature, who died of tuberculosis at the age of 27. A revolutionary writer, he denounced the injustices of Albanian society. His work was brought together in a number of collections (*Kangët e ringjallës*, "Songs of Resurrection"; *Kangët e mjerimit*, "Songs of Affliction"; *Kangët e përndimit*, "Songs of Twilight"; *Kangët e rinisë*, "Songs of Youth"), and a selection of his poetry has been translated into French.

Another important figure in this generation was Nonda Bulka (1906-72), who specialised in satire and lampoons (*Kur qan e qesh bilbili*, "When the Nightingale Laughs and Cries", 1934; *Fabula*, "Fables", 1965; *Maska të çjerra*, "Torn Masks"). He also denounced the rise of Fascism and the failure of western governments to realise the danger it presented.

Patriotic subjects were a constant sourc of inspiration for the writers of this period, but they also tackled quite new subjects like the emancipation of women. Haki Stërmilli's novel *Sikur t'isha djalë* ("If I were a boy"), published in 1936, attracted much attention at the time.

The Italian occupation and the second world war inevitably hampered literary activity; and political pamphlets and patriotic songs, frequently published in the journal of the young Albanian Communist Party, *Zëri i popullit*, "Voice of the People", took precedence over larger-scale works.

A FLOWERING OF ALL LITERARY GENRES

After 1944 writers adopted the principle of socialist realism and sought to give a faithful reflection of the new society. As members of the Writers' League, founded in November 1945, they had a mission to educate the masses and consolidate the socialist order.

But following such principles does not necessarily guarantee success as a writer or produce literature of high quality. And Albanian literary critics, much to the fore after 1944, are not slow to criticise, as can be seen from the articles of Dalan Shapilo, a writer and literary theorist, Alfred Uçi, Myzafer Xhaxhiu and Koço Bihiku, whose *History of Albanian Literature* (published in French in Tirana, 1980), is extremely suggestive.

All literary genres now developed, particularly drama, which had remained somewhat backward; for there was no real theatrical tradition in Albania apart from a few shadow and puppet

theatres. Between the two wars the actor Alexander Moisi gained some reputation on European stages, at a time when the Albanian theatre was still closed to women. The first professional company was established only in 1944. Albania now has something like fifteen companies.

The Albanian theatre finally established its position with the work of Kolë Jakova (b. 1916), a poet and novelist as well as a dramatist. His play *Toka jonë* ("Our Land"), which illustrates the importance of the revolution to ordinary people, is considered his finest dramatic work. Spiro Çomora (1918-73), who was also a poet, is known particularly for his comedy *Karnavalet e Korçës* ("The Carnivals of Korça"), published in 1964, which stigmatises the anti-patriotic circles of the 1940s. The best known writers of the present day are Fadil Kraja (b. 1930), Ruzhdi Pulaha (b. 1942), Sulejman Pitarka (b. 1924) and Loni Papa (b. 1932).

Unlike the situation in western Europe, poetry still holds an important place in Albania, and most of its writers are primarily, or also, poets. This is the case, for example, with Dritëro Agolli (b. 1931) and Ismail Kadarë (b. 1936), the latter of whom ranks among the greatest contemporary writers. The poetic output of Dritëro Agolli is very considerable, including, for example, the following collections: *Në rrugë dolla* ("I have set out on the road"). *Hapat e mia në asfalt* ("My Steps on the Asphalt"), *Poemë për babanë dhe për vete* ("Poems for my Father and for me"), *Shtigje malesh dhe trotuare* ("Mountain Paths and Pavements") and above all *Nënë Shqipëri* ("My Mother Albania"). Ismail Kadarë, well known as a novelist (some of his novels have been published in French), is also a poet (*Shekulli im*, "My Century"; *Përse mendohen këto male?*, "What are these mountains thinking of?"); *Koha*, "Time", 1976).

The greatest activity, however, has been in prose writing, and particularly in the novel—a genre which had practically never been tackled before Independence, at any rate in Albanian. The first novels in Albanian were the work of Ndoc Nikaj (1864-1945): *Shkodra e rrethueme* ("Shkodra Encircled"), *Fejesa n'djep ose Ulgini i marrun* ("Betrothal in the Cradle, or the Taking of Ulquin") and *Lulet në thes* ("Flowers in the Bag"), in which he mingles patriotic themes with love stories. Other novelists are Foqion Postoli (1889-1927), author of *Për mbrojtjen e atdheut* ("In Defence of the Homeland") and *Lulja*

e kujtimit ("Flower of Memory"), and Haki Stërmilli, author of "If I were a boy", already mentioned.

The novel is developing so remarkably that it is beginning to rival poetry. The works of Dritëro Agolli, *Komisari i Memo* ("Commissar Memo"), *Shkëlqmi dhe rënia e shokut Zylo* ("Greatness and Decline of Comrade Zylo") and *Njeriu me top* ("The Man with a Cannon") are particularly popular. Ismail Kadarë's fame has spread beyond the frontiers of Albania, most of his novels and collections of short stories having been translated into other languages. Over the last fifteen years or so, for example, the following works have been published in French: *The General of the Dead Army* in 1970, *Drums of the Rain* and *The Great Winter* in 1972,*Chronicle in Stone* in 1973, *Twilight of the Gods of the Steppe* in 1980, *The Nook of Shame* in 1984, *Who killed Doruntine?* in 1986 and recently *April Broken*, which was made into an excellent film.

Contemporary prose writing is represented by a multitude of authors handling a great variety of themes, as can be judged from the *Anthology of Albanian Prose* recently published in France. Albania's remote past, however, still remains a considerable source of inspiration alongside the second world war and the struggle for national liberation: it is indeed the main theme of contemporary poetry.

Increasing numbers of works, however, have been concerned with the establishment and development of socialism—the class struggle, the reaction of individuals to the new economic and social conditions brought about by socialism, or merely by modern life. This provides an opportunity to give expression to the contrast between earlier times and the post-Liberation period, in order to show the benefits brought by the emerging socialist society. Thus Aleks Caçi, in his poem *Ashtu Myzeqe* ("This is Myzeqe", 1947), after evoking the "endless agony" of ordinary people in Albania, celebrates the optimism which they feel, in spite of all the difficulties, in the immediate post-war period, and Llaza Siliqi's *Miku* ("The Friend", 1963) presents the figure of Hasan Fani, whose joy and optimism cannot efface the sad memories of the past.

The Party, too, the instrument of liberation, is feted and honoured, as in Ismail Kadarë's well known poem *Shqiponjat fluturojnë lart* ("The Eagles Fly High", 1966).

The victory of the people and the new prospects opening up for the country are, of course, popular themes, and poems of this kind are frequently set to music. Examples are Dhimitër S. Shuteriqi's *Këngë për grurin e ri* ("Song for the New Grain") and Aleks Caçi's *Kanali i Myzeqesë* ("The Myzeqe Canal"). There are also songs celebrating the joy of labour and the life of the heroes of socialism, like Andrea Varfi's *Heroit Hajdar T. Goriçani* ("To the Hero Hadjar T. Goriçani") and Aleksandër Banushi's *Këngë për traktoristët* ("Song for Tractor-Drivers").

Gradually the analysis becomes subtler, and writers seek to paint the inner portrait of the man of today, free of all backward-looking ideas, to whom Llazar Siliqi dedicates his *Poemë për njeriun e ri dhe realizmin socialist* ("Poem for the New Man and Socialist Realism"). Heroism is the quality necessary for the new man, as illustrated, for example, in Dhimitër Xhuvani's story *Zhurma të forta* ("Uproar"); for things do not always work out by themselves. The putting into practice of revolutionary ideas convulses Albanian society to its foundations, and it has to "digest" the centres of resistance. The reactions of the malcontents, the anti-popular classes and the traitors are dangerous: this is the theme of Fatmir Gjata's novel *Këneta* ("The Marsh").

More generally, retrograde customs are still rife in society, and it is necessary to attack the hangovers from the old world, its ideology and its morality. The status of Albanian women presents great problems, for it is the women who will have most difficulty in breaking with the past. This subject has given rise to much recent writing, like Loni Papa's play *Cuca e Maleve* ("The Girl of the Mountains"), from which Nikolla Zoraqi drew a successful ballet, and Sterjo Spasse's novel *Afërdita përsëri në fshat* ("Aphrodite returns to the Village").

It is not sufficient, however, to combat conservatism, retrograde customs and the petit bourgeois spirit, as Ruzhdi Pulaha does with such talent in his comedy *Zonja nga qyteti* ("The Lady of the Town"), which was made into a funny and well acted film. Other scourges are rife, engendered by modern society, by the capitalist or revisionist environment, or even by the system itself. Ismail Kadarë's poem *Vitet gjashtëdhjetë* ("The Sixties") takes up the people's and the party's struggle against the modern revisionists. Zihni Sako's play *Motra Katerinë* ("Sister Catherine") unmasks individualism, egoism and "parasitism". It is mainly, however, the bureaucratic phenomenon that inspires the greatest passion: in poetry, for

example, there is Fatos Arapi's *Antiburokratike* ("Antibureaucratic"), in prose Qamil Buxheli's *Kur qesh tërë qyteti* ("When the Whole Town Laughs"), which attacks the arbitrary behaviour and the careerism of officials. Dritëro Agolli's *Greatness and Decline of Comrade Zyko* is a very sucessful satire on this scourge of modern times.

Even within the framework of a guidebook devoted to the Socialist People's Republic of Albania reference must be made to the existence of the two considerable Albanian-speaking communities in Italy and Yugoslavia, in both of which there is intense cultural activity.

Albanian culture in Italy is very much alive, as is evidenced by the foundation of new Albanian journals and the establishment of the Society of Albanian (*Arbëresh*) Writers and Artists. Poetry takes pride of place, but the other genres are also developing. The leading representative of contemporary Albanian-language literature is Dushko Vetmo (the pseudonym of Francesco Solano, b. 1914), poet, prose writer and grammarian; but there are many others, like Vorea Ujko (b. 1931), Carmelo Candreva (1931-82), Lluka Perone and Pietro Napoletano.

In Kosovo, and to a lesser degree in Macedonia and Montenegro, a modern Albanian literary movement came into being only from 1945 onwards. Its best representatives are Esat Mekuli, whose collection of poems *Për ty* ("For You") was for long its finest poetic achievement, Hivzi Sulejmani, author of the great novel *Era dhe kolona* ("The Wind and the Column"), and Rexhep Qosja.

Description and Itineraries

FIRST ITINERARY :

SOUTHERN ALBANIA

A. Tirana to Elbasan (53 km)

Leaving Tirana on the Elbasan road, we pass on the right the wooded park surrounding the **Palace of the Brigades,** in which the most important official occasions (receptions on the National Day, etc.) take place. This was the meeting-place of the "National Convention", called together by Hitler after the Italian capitulation, which was bombarded by partisans installed on Mt Dajti (18 October 1943). The Palace is set in a large natural park containing a **lake** (area 50 hectares) with facilities for boating and bathing and a restaurant, where it is pleasant to dine in the open air, sometimes to the accompaniment of music. In the park, which can be entered by a gate near the University, are a number of monuments, including one (by Odhise Paskali and Thomaj Thoma, 1978) commemorating the Frashëri brothers, Abdyl, Naim and Sami, leading figures of the National Renaissance, as well as the **Botanic Garden** and the **Zoological Garden.**

On the left is the **Monument to the Martyrs of the Struggle for National Liberation,** with the graves of Enver Hoxha, heroes of the Resistance and leaders of the Party and the government.

We then come to two villages, **Sauk** on the right and **Farka** on the left, noted for the production of pottery which was formerly supplied to the market in Tirana. The vineyards and orchards lining the road belong to the important *Gjergj Dimitrov state farm.*

The hamlet of **Sharre,** belonging to the village of Sauk, was the birthplace of Haxhi Qamili, leader of the rising by the peasants of central Albania in 1914. The house in which he was born is now a museum.

After crossing the bridge over the river Erzen (12 km) we see on the right the ruins of the **cttadel of Petrela,** which commanded the Erzen valley and was able to communicate by light signals with other strongholds, in particular the castle of Kruja.

The existence of the citadel (*kala*) of Petrela is attested from the 11th century. It is built of alternate courses of brick and stone, on a triangular plan (following the shape of the summit of the hill), with round towers at the corners. It had a double circuit of walls and a single entrance, so designed that it could be swept by fire from the defenders.

Petrela played an important part during Skanderbeg's resistance to the Ottoman invasion. It is said to have been the residence of the hero's sister Mamica and to contain the grave of their contemporary Ballaban Pasha, an Albanian who went over to the Turks. At the end of the 15th century the fortress was garrisoned by janissaries, as is evidenced by their *tyrbes* (funerary monuments).

The village declined in importance after the founding of Tirana in the 18th century by Sulejman Pasha Mulleti, whose name is recalled by the village of **Mullet,** on the left of the road. One of his descendants, Qazim Mulleti, was prefect of Tirana between the two wars. He features in Besim Levonja's satirical comedy *Prefekti* ("The Prefect"), which was a great theatrical hit a few years ago.

On the right of the road is a monument (by the sculptor Hektor Dule) commemorating the bloody battle of Mushqeta in November 1944, a partisan victory which prepared the way for the liberation of Tirana.

The **Mushqeta lignite mine,** to the left of the road, was opened in 1969, at the same time as the **Kërrabë mine,** a short distance farther on, was modernised. To house the miners a new village, Kërrabë, was built at the foot of a hill on which there are some Illyrian remains.

The road now enters the Kërrabë hills. Its route was no doubt influenced by military considerations, and as a result it affords wide views on both sides. After following the crest line for some distance it goes over the Kërrabë pass, which separates the Tirana district from the Elbasan district, but reaches its highest point only at the *kulla* (fortified tower) of Graceni, the ruins of which can be seen on the left. Soon afterwards the descent to Elbasan begins in a series of sharp bends which afford striking views of the Shkumbin valley —unfortunately often obscured by fumes from the Elbasan metalworking plant. On the left is an old **fort** in a handsome style of architecture which forms a good **viewpoint.**

B. Elbasan

Elbasan, situated in a roughly oval collapse plain measuring some 15 km by 6, is a very ancient town. In the Roman period it was known as *Scampa* (a name recorded in a Latin inscription now in the town's Historical Museum) and lay at the junction of two branches of the *Via Egnatia* coming from

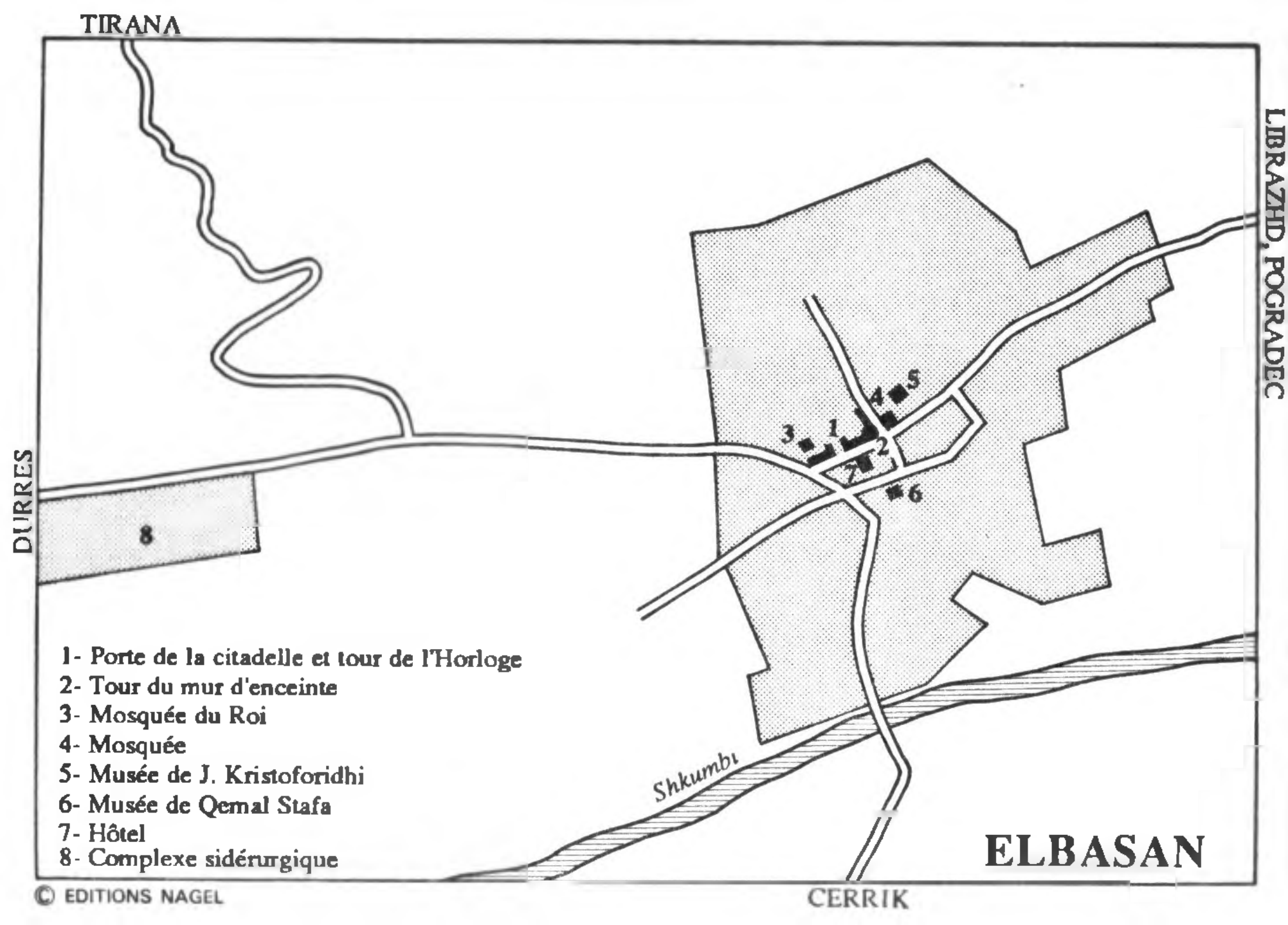
Durrës (*Dyrrachium*) and Pojan (*Apollonia*): a situation which brought it a high degree of prosperity. It became the see of a bishop at least as early as the beginning of the 4th century. It was largely destroyed by the invasions, particularly by the Ostrogoths, but seems to have recovered fairly quickly, for its citadel is referred to in the *Buildings* of Procopius of Caesarea (6th c.). In the 9th century, however, it was again devastated by the Bulgars, and the site was abandoned until 1466, when Mehmet II rebuilt the town as a base against Skanderbeg, naming it *Ilibasan* ("strong place"), which became Elbasan. These facts are recorded in a bilingual inscription in Turkish and Arabic preserved in the Historical Museum.

The town now enjoyed, after fifteen centuries, an economic and intellectual upsurge. Elbasan was the centre of the efforts made in the 18th century—with only limited success—to give Albania an alphabet of its own, distinct from those used by writers belonging to the country's three religions; and it was also in Elbasan that Albania's first secular secondary school giving instruction in the national language was opened in 1909. This teachers' training vollege produced hundreds of teachers and many scholars like Alexandër Xhuvani.

In 1945 Elbasan had a population of less than 15,000, but since then it has acquired many industrial

ELBASAN

1 Gate of Citadel and Clock-Tower
2 Tower on town walls
3 King's Mosque
4 Mosque
5 Kristoforidhi Museum
6 Qemal Stafa Museum
7 Hotel
8 Metalworking plant



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installations, including the metalworking plant already mentioned, a timber-processing factory and a large cement works, and now has almost 75.000 inhabitants.

The **Citadel** of Elbasan, rebuilt by Mehmet II on Byzantine substructures, is one of the few Albanian fortresses situated in the plain. Rectangular in plan, it had 26 towers. Only the south wall has survived complete, with its towers and gateway, the Bazaar Gate, above which there was a small mosque without a minaret, now destroyed.

Entering the precincts of the Citadel, you pass, on the right of the main street, one of the oldest mosques in Albania, the King's Mosque (*Xhamija mbret*), which dates from the end of the 15th century. It consists of a porch and an almost square prayer hall (11.5 m by 12.3), which is divided into two parts by three wooden columns. In each of the side walls are four windows, regularly spaced on two levels. The lower windows, though rectangular in shape, are surmounted by pointed brick arches.

Walking through the narrow streets of the town, lined by picturesque houses, you will successively discover the Teachers' Training College, founded in 1909, which became a nursery for patriots and intellectuals, and the houses (now museums) of the *rilindas* Simon Shuteriqi and Kostandin Kristoforidhi, the translator of the Bible. Kristoforidhi's **funerary monument** stands between the old Orthodox church, which preserves its iconostasis and a few good icons, and the **Museum of Education,** housed in the building which was the meeting-place of the Educational Congress of 1909, when it was resolved to establish the teachers' training college.

It is worth looking into the **Historical Museum,** the most notable items in which are stelae, fragments of sculpture and inscriptions of the ancient and medieval periods.

Leaving the east side of the Citadel, you will see the **Nazireshte Mosque** (1599), square in plan and surmounted by a handsome dome. It has unfortunately lost its minaret, which was built in alternate courses of stone and brick. You will also see the old prison, the exterior of which is sufficient to give an idea of what the prisons of the Ottoman Empire were like, and then return to the wide Qemal Stafa Boulevard near the well preserved 17th century hammam which stands beside the *Skampa Hotel.*

Other features of interest in Elbasan are the birthplace of Alexandër Xhuvani, a well known linguist who was director of the teachers' training college; the birthplace of the Resistance hero Qemal Stafa; the **Ethnographic Museum,** in process of being installed in a well restored old house; and the **Museum of Popular Culture,** in a handsome middle-class house of the early 20th century.

Surroundings of Elbasan

13 km south of Elbasan is the little climatic resort of **Llixhat,** with mineral springs which have been used since ancient times for the treatment of rheumatism and skin diseases.

C. Elbasan to Pogradec

The main road follows the valley of the Shkumbin, as the *Via Egnatia* did; but while the Via Egnatia ran along the left bank of the river the modern road and railway keep to the right bank.

After passing Mt Krasta, the ruined citadel of Mengli, and an excellently preserved humpbacked Turkish bridge *(Ura e Kamarës)* the road comes to the large farming village of **Labinot** (7 km from Elbasan), where the Shkumbin flows very tranquilly. A local legend has it that this is because a shepherd girl in the village persuaded the river to lower its voice so that she could hear the words of love addressed to her by a shepherd in Polis, a village on the other bank of the river.

Important political and military meetings took place in Labinot during the second world war. They were held in the hamlet of Labinot Mah (Labinot the Mountain), in a handsome house in typical local style, now a **museum,** Note the statue of Enver Hoxha by the great Albanian sculptor Odhise Paskali (1903-85).

On the left bank can be seen a few traces of the ancient Via Egnatia. The modern road then comes to **Librazhd** (24 km), the starting-point of a difficult mountain road to Dibër (now Debar, in Yugoslavia) and Peshkopi. The village contains a small **Ethnological Museum** of some interest. The river and the road now turn south-east and come to **Qukës,** which in Roman times was a staging-point (*Tres Tabernae*, the Three Inns) on the *Via Egnatia*. Soon afterwards, on the right of the road, are a fountain and a monument to the struggle for liberation, from which there is a good view of a cylindrical limestone mountain which stands out sharply on the skyline. Its shape has earned it the name of *Sofra e Skënderbeut*, Skanderbeg's Table. The road now runs on to the Domosdova plateau, the floor of an ancient lake which was drained by the Shkumbin. The memory of Skanderbeg

is still very much alive in this region, through which the Turkish armies attacking Kruja usually passed, and it is believed that he won his first victory over the Turks here in 1444. On the right of the road can be seen a small monument to Skanderbeg. A few kilometres away to the left, at Rajca, is a narrow defile known as "Skanderbeg's Staircase". The story goes that it was constructed by the hero in a single night in order to provide an escape route from a fortress in which he had been surrounded, the noise of the tools being covered by the singing of traditional wedding songs. In the mountains on either side of the road are numerous ferro-nickel mines, the most important of which is at **Pishkash**

After the little township of Përrenjas the road begins to wind its way up from the Domosdova plateau to the *Qafa e Thanës* (Pass of the Cornel-Tree; 931 m), 64 km from Elbasan. A road to the left, on the line of the Via Egnatia, leads to the frontier (4 km) and the Yugoslav town of Struga (16 km). The main road runs down towards Pogradec, with wide prospects of **Lake Ohrid,** which the Albanians call Lake Pogradec. The view extends over the whole of the lake in its setting of mountains and, in fine weather, as far as the towns of Struga and Ohrid.

This is the largest lake in the Balkans after Lake Shkodra. Like that lake, it is shared between Albania and Yugoslavia. It has an area of 363 sq. km and a maximum depth of 286 m. It is drained by the Black Drin, which leaves the lake at Struga and flows down to the Adriatic.

The first village to be seen, on the left of the road, is **Lin,** a fishing community whose houses huddle

against a rock lying between them and the lake. The houses themselves, similar in type to those of Elbasan, form an attractive ensemble; but the principal archaeological feature of Lin is its very fine early Christian mosaic (which unfortunately is within a military area).

The present terminus of the railway is reached at *Guri i Ruq* ("Red Stone"), which has a ferro-nickel mine and an ore concentration plant. Beyond this, after a monument to the victims of a clash during the war of national liberation, the road continues to Memelishtë, with a chromium mine (on right), and Pogradec.

D. Pogradec

The site of Pogradec has been occupied since Illyrian times, and this may have been the chief town of an Illyrian tribe, the Enkeletes. Its present name (meaning "above the town"), however, is of Slav origin, reflecting a long period of Bulgar or Serbian occupation in medieval times. The town itself dates only from the 18th century. During the 19th century its favourable situation enabled it to supplant and then absorb Starova (which nevertheless remained the administrative centre of the region for many years).

Pogradec occupies a very attractive site. Sheltered on the west by the hills of Kamje and *Mal i Ahishtë* ("Hill of the Beech-Grove"), it has a large and safe bathing beach with a fine view of the lake. Beyond the lake is the *Mal i Thatë* ("Dry Hill'), rising to

over 2000 m, which lies between Lake Ohrid and Lake Prespa; on the far right is the monastery of Shën Naum (Sveti Naum), now in Yugoslavia. This was ceded to Yugoslavia by King Zog on the ground that it was the place of burial of St Naum, one of the companions of SS. Cyril and Methodius, and thus was of particular importance to the Slav world. Nevertheless its loss was much resented in Albania.

The **Historical Museum** is worth a visit, as is the **Museum of Painting.** (The great painter Vangjush Mio was a frequent visitor to Pogradec, and the town has remained a favourite haunt of artists and writers, like the poet Lasgush Poradeci, 1900-87). To the right of the road are a number of narrow streets of picturesque old houses.

The red wines of Pogradec (Gemc and Pamid) are renowned, as are the fish in the lake, particularly the *koran*, a kind of salmon trout with a very delicate taste which is rare and difficult to find. At the far end of the town a road goes off on the left to **Drilon Park,** which offers pleasant walking under shady trees as well as boating on the lake. A café offers refreshments in a very pleasant setting.

E. Pogradec to Korça

The road leaves the lake and climbs to the Plloçë pass *(Qafa e Plloçës)* and on to an extensive plateau (35 km by 15) surrounded by bare hills, the Korça basin *(Pellgu i Korçës)*. Situated at an altitude of some 800 m, which gives it a continental climate (January average 1°C, July average 18°C), the Korça basin is one of the most fertile regions in Albania. Part of the basin was covered by the Maliq marshes,

but these were drained soon after the Liberation, in the face of considerable difficulties: an achievement which was the subject of an interesting novel by Fatmir Gjata, *Këneta* ("The Marsh"; translated into French as "Le Marais"). 6000 hectares have been recovered for agriculture and another 6000 have been drained. This is the centre of sugar-beet growing in Albania, and there is a sugar refinery at Maliq, established in 1951, round which a small town has grown up. The town, 27 km from Pogradec, is reached after passing on the left the little village of Zvirine, where the lot of the peasants was notoriusly bad. The wall within which the houses of the village were huddled was preserved until a few years ago as a reminder of the past.

The **Maliq** drainage scheme led to the discovery of a lake settlement occupied in Neolithic times and, on dry land, an Early Bronze Age site. Material recovered from these sites is now in the Historical Museum in Korça and the Archaeological Museum in Tirana.

F. Korça

12 km farther on is Korça (180 km from Tirana; alt. 866 m; pop. 58,000). The town dates only from the end of the 15th century, when Iljaz Bey Mirahor, equerry to Mehmet II, erected a number of public buildings with the object of attracting settlers, in particular a mosque which is one of the finest examples of Islamic art in Albania. The town gradually prospered and in the 19th century, after the devastation of Voskopoja, became an important commercial and intellectual centre. Here in 1887, in accordance with the programme of the Albanian National Renaissance, was opened the first secular school in which

teaching was given in Albanian, and in 1891 the first girls' school. In 1912 the people of Korça defended themselves vigorously against the bands of Greek irregulars who were trying, with the support of the governor of Athens and the Orthodox clergy, to win over the territory for Greece. During the first world war the region was occupied by Austria-Hungary, then by the Greeks and in 1916 by French forces. The French, under Colonel Descoins, sought to appeal to the patriotic feelings of the population and set up an autonomous republic of Korça with Themistokli Gërmenji, who had distinguished himself in operations against the Greeks, as President. Greece's entry into the war on the side of the Allies put an end to this experiment, and Gërmenji himself, accused of connivance with Austria-Hungary, was condemned to death by a French court-martial and shot in Salonica. The French did not, however, hand the territory over to the Greeks, in spite of their insistence, and returned it to the Albanian authorities in 1920. A lasting monument to this collaboration was the *lycée* of Korça, established in 1917, in which the teaching was given in French as well as in Albanian. This school, headed for many years by the French writer Xavier de Courville, was a great success and, until the Italian invasion, made a major contribution to the education of the Albanian élite of the period. Enver Hoxha was a pupil and later a teacher in the school.

Korça was also an important centre of political thought. The *Puna* (Labour) mutual benefit society was run clandestinely by communists (the Korça group), and the journal *Bota e Re* ("New World") promoted a liberal and democratic policy which soon led to its being banned by King Zog's government.

Korça is entered along a wide avenue flanked by factories, notably a carpet factory (on left) which it is enteresting to visit. The avenue runs into a square in which is the *Iliria Hotel.* Beyond this are the Avenue of the Barricades, the scene in 1936 of a demonstration by the unemployed which was brutally repressed, and Demonstration Square, in which an anti-German demonstration in front of the monument to the Unknown Soldier in 1943 was also harshly put down.

To the left is the Boulevard of the Republic, the traditional place of promenade for the people of Korça and particularly, they say, for marriageable girls. The girls of Korça are famed for their beauty: a local saying has it that a man must marry "*ose korçare ose hiç fare*" ("either a Korça girl or no one at all"). The boulevard is lined by houses in Central European style built by Korça businessmen in the late 19th and early 20th century. With their columns and wrought-iron work and their little lush green front gardens these houses are a very characteristic and attractive sight. The *Hunters' Café*, on the right, has long been a popular rendezvous with the citizens of Korça. Also in this street are the house occupied by Enver Hoxha when a teacher at the Korça *lycée* and, in gardens on the left, a bust of Themistokli Gërmenji.

Also on the left is the *Valbona Restaurant*, in a well preserved old patrician house, which has a high reputation for its cuisine.

We now come to the stadium and, on the right, the road to Bilisht, on which was what used to be known as the Meadow of Tears *(Lëndina e Loteve)*, so called because it was here that the families of the

town said goodbye to the large numbers of men who left to seek work abroad. On the right of the road is a beautiful **public park.** On the outskirts of the town, on the left, is a carefully maintained **French military cemetery,** with the inscription in French and Albanian, "Here lie 640 soldiers of the French army who died for their country, 1916-1918".

A few paces from the Iliria Hotel is the **bazaar quarter,** the restoration of which has just begun. A good example of the work being done here is the old *han* (inn, with stables for mounted travellers) which now houses the Exhibition of the Material and Spiritual Culture of the Region *(Eksposita e kulturës materiale dhe shpirtërore të rrethit).* This is built round a central courtyard which is entered through three gates. On the ground floor were stabling and store-rooms for goods; on the upper floor were small rooms for travellers, opening off a gallery running round the whole building.

The exhibition, on the upper floor, consists mainly of carpets, costumes, pottery, ceramics, ironwork and brass and copper ware, both traditional and modern. The traditional and the modern are displayed side by side, in order to show how traditional decorative themes are used in modern industrial products. On the ground floor are a number of craft workshops (particularly weaving and tanning), which are to be transferred to shops in the bazaar after their rehabilitation, and various pieces of craft machinery, either originals or reproductions (a water-driven saw, fulling mill, etc.). The building was used as a prison during the second world war, and one of the cells has been made into a small local memorial to the

members of the Resistance and those who were deported to work for the enemy.

The programme of renovation will also include the nearby mosque already mentioned, the **Xhamija e Mirahorit,** which has an inscription in the porch dating its construction to 1494. It consists of a single prayer hall 9.60 m square roofed by a hemispherical dome borne on squinches. The walls are 1.20 m thick. The tripartite porch is roofed by domes borne on narrow arches springing from square pilasters.

Most of the other museums lie to the east, in a charming part of the town with narrow streets lined by houses of traditional type, many of which are interesting. In one of these houses is the **Vangjush Mio Museum,** which contains 70 works by the painter of that name (1891-1957), a disciple of the Impressionists and one of the finest of modern Albanian artists. In another old house is the **Museum of Woman.** Here too is the building once occupied by the French *lycée.*

The building in which the first Albanian school was opened now houses the **National Museum of Education,** established in 1967.

The **Museum of Medieval Albanian Art** *(Muzeu i artit mesjetar shqiptar)* occupies a modern functional building of 1980. (It should be remembered that for the Albanians the medieval period comes down to the 18th century.) In the vestibule are photographs and models illustrating different types of houses and fortifications traditionally used in Albania. There are also a number of original items, the most important of which is an arcade from a mosque in Kavaja. A room on the left displays early Christian objects. On the upper floor are a number of magnificent examples

of religious gold and silver work (Gospel covers, sacred vessels, icon casings) and a fine series of icons, including some by the famous icon-painter Onufre. There are also a number of copies (not labelled as such), like the fresco of the Sower by David Selenica in the church of St Nicholas in Voskopoja and a fresco in the Mosque of Etem Bey in Tirana. Returning to the ground floor, we can see a magnificent carved iconostasis from Korça Cathedral and a number of fine icons by local masters of the early 19th century, Constantin and Athanase. By the iconostasis is an exuberantly decorated but elegant bishop's throne of the same period. The visit concludes with a variety of secular objects of considerable quality.

Surroundings of Korça

The best general view of the town and surrounding area is to be had from the steps of the **Monument to the Martyrs of the Resistance,** which can be seen to the left of the Tirana road when entering the town, and from the terrace of the rest home above it.

The village of **Mborje** (3 km from Korça) lies under Mount Morava, on one of the spurs of which are the remains of an ancient citadel. The name of the village (from Greek *Emporion)* is a reminder of its one-time commercial importance. Its main feature of interest is the **Church of the Ascension** *(Kisha e Ristozit)*, rebuilt at the end of the 14th century on earlier foundations. It is notable that the alternating courses of brick and stone are imitated in the neighbouring buildings of recent construction. The church contains frescoes of fine quality. Set in a churchyard planted with acacias, it gives an impression of great serenity.

The same serenity is found in the neighbouring village of **Drenova,** undisturbed by the comings and goings of the workers employed in the coal mines in the nearby hills, which have been known since Ottoman times. A **national park** has been established in the coniferous forests surrounding the village.

G. Korça to Gjirokastër

From the near end of Korça a road goes off on the right, winds its way over a fertile plain and climbs gradually through bare hills to a high plateau surrounded by pine forests. Here, at an altitude of 1115 m, is the village of **Voskopoja** (24 km from Korça).

In spite of its well paved streets and its substantial stone-built houses with their shingle roofs the present village is a mere shadow of the town which is said to have had a population of 30,000 in the 18th century and was the first place in Albania to have a printing press. In those days it was the home of important writers like Theodore Kavalioti and Theodore Haxhifilipi (also known as Dhaskal Todri), it provided work for painters like the brothers Constantin and Athanase of Korça and David Selenica, and its merchants traded as far afield as Saxony and Poland. It was, indeed, the wealth accumulated in the town that tempted the neighbouring feudal lords, from the late 18th century onwards, to undertake a series of plundering raids which finally destroyed the prosperity of the town.

The destruction was completed by the two world wars; but Voskopoja still has a number of churches, poorly preserved, which bear witness to its former

splendour. **St Nicholas's Church,** behind a bell-tower rebuilt in the 20th century, has preserved intact its seven-domed porch. The interior, which has retained much of its furnishings, is decorated with frescoes by Constantin and Athanase of Korça. To the left of the entrance are two frescoes of artistic and iconographic interest by David Selenica, one representing a peasant sowing seed (a Christian symbol which came into favour again in the Rilindja), the other depicting the donor of the church. The iconostasis is of fine quality, but badly damaged by fire. **St Mary's Church** and **St Michael's Church** are on the same plan, but the porch is destroyed apart from the last bay to the east, now with a later roof designed to protect the fresco on the rear wall. The interior has frescoes by unknown artists treated with unusual realism. St Michael's is empty, but St Mary's has an iconostasis in reasonable condition. Two other churches are more difficult of access, the **Church of St Athanasius,** which has paintings by Constantin of Berat, and the church of the **Monastery of St John the Baptist** (*Shën Prodhrom*).

Boboshtica, 7 km from Korça, is reached by taking a side road which goes off the Erseka road on the left. A short distance before the village, to the right, are two small churches, **St Mary's** and **St John's,** with interesting frescoes. The village itself, whose inhabitants speak a Macedonian / Bulgarian dialect as well as Albanian, is noted for its numerous mulberry-trees, some of them over a hundred years old; the mulberries, which ripen in July / August, are unusually large and very tasty, with an abundance of juice whose stains are very difficult to eradicate. They are used to produce a kind of syrup, a tradi-

tional remedy for sore throats, and a raki of excellent quality which is not marketed commercially.

12 km beyond this on a very poor road, which alternates between stretches of open country affording wide views and beech groves, with an increasing intermixture of conifers and birches, is the village of **Dardha,** marked by a magnificent pine-tree on the left of the road which is scheduled as a natural monument. The streets are paved and the houses are substantially built of dark-coloured stone and roofed with shingles, which unfortunately have sometimes been replaced by tiles or, worse still, by corrugated iron.

Dardha, situated in a verdant setting and lulled by the sound of numerous springs, is a pleasant altitude resort (1350 m) and winter sports centre. The road, or rather the track, continues through forest country and at the large village of Bilisht rejoins the asphalted road from Korça to the frontier post at Kapshnicë and from there to Florina in Greece.

We now return to the Erseka road. After passing on the left the village of Floqi we come in 12 km to a road on the right which climbs up from the Korça plain in a series of sharp bends. After passing the village of **Ujibardhë** (or Bjelovodan, "White Waters"), famed for its mineral springs (on right), we come (on left) to the **Gjanci Dam,** which serves both to provide water for irrigation and to produce electricity. This great sheet of water relieves the austerity of the surrounding country. The road runs past a small hydroelectric station built before the second world war to supply water and electricity to the town of Korça, which enjoyed these services even before the capital. Its small size is significant

of the state of development of the country in those days.

15 km beyond this is the village of **Vithkuq,** in a situation similar to that of Voskopoja, whose destiny it shared. Vithkuq was the birthplace of Naum Veqilarxhi, one of the initiators of the *Rilindja* (Albanian Renaissance). There is a small museum dedicated to his memory. The village has three interesting churches, St Peter's, St Michael's and St George's, the last of which closely resembles the churches of Voskopoja.

Returning to the Erseka road, we follow it as it climbs to the *Qala e Qarrit* (Pass of the Oak-Tree; 1123 m), which separates the Korça basin from the high plain of Kolonja, the floor of an ancient lake which is now the upper valley of the Osum. This is one of the most thinly populated areas in Albania, with only 28 inhabitants to the sq. kilometre, and the only part of the country where the population shows practically no increase: the end of the emigration movement which in the past took many people away from the land barely compensates for the effects of the area's remoteness and harsh climate. The plain is bordered on the east by the bare ridge of Mt Gramos, which is partly in Albania and partly in Greece and is occupied on both sides of the frontier by the Aromuni, a Vlach pastoral people now beginning to adopt a sedentary way of life, at least in Albania; to the west the landscape is less forbidding, with large tracts of pine forest. The road continues to **Erseka** (45 km from Korça), a small administrative centre of no great interest, and the little village of **Borova,** the whole population of which, including women and children, was massacred by the Nazis

in July 1943 in reprisal for an ambush by partisans at the Barmash pass, a few kilometres farther on. The massacre is commemorated by a monument on a low hill to the right of the road.

The Barmash pass gives access to a very wild region, almost without agriculture or habitations but with an austere beauty of its own. The road continues through one valley after another, along hillsides covered with beautiful fir forests, to the little village of **Leskovik** (84 km from Korça), on the slopes of Mt Melesini. Almost all the old houses of the village, belonging to beys whose territories usually extended into Greece, disappeared during the Balkan war and the second world war. The wine and raki of Leskovik are among the best in Albania, but the vineyards are limited in extent and it is difficult to obtain these local products. Soon after Leskovik the road bears right towards Përmet and runs into the valley of the Vjosa, the left bank of which is dominated by the formidable barrier of the Nëmerçka massif. The limestone of this range is so white that it seems to be covered with snow into the height of summer, though it is of relatively modest height, reaching 2489 m in the peak of *Maja e Papingut*.

The road runs past (on right) the villages of **Çarshova** and **Petran,** beyond which is the beautiful church of the Saviour at Tremislet (1580).

A short distance before Përmet is the village of **Leusa,** with a domed church (early 13th century) which has interesting frescoes. Its fine iconostasis is in the Archaeological Museum in Tirana.

Përmet is a small administrative centre whose inhabitants were very active in the struggle for liberation, in consequence of which it was burned down

three times. Here on 24 May 1944, in a room which is now a museum, was held the Anti-Fascist Congress of National Liberation, which is also commemorated by a monument by Odhise Paskali. The town, attractively situated, has little else of interest to offer the visitor, apart from a sheer crag, the *Gur i Qytetit* (Rock of the Town) which rears above the Vjosa and is crowned by a ruined castle. The wine and particularly the raki of Përmet are justly celebrated.

A few kilometres from the town a poor track goes off on the right to the village of **Frashëri,** home of the three Frashëri brothers, Abdyl, Naim and Sami, the leading figures of the *Rilindja.* Their house, heavily restored, is now a museum. Also of interest, a short distance away, is a *teqe*, a convent of the Moslem Bektashi sect.

Farther on is the village of **Kosinë,** with a Byzantine-style church on a typical plan.

The road then comes to the little township of **Këlcyra,** on the far side of which, to the right, are the ruins of the strategically situated castle of the Beys of Këlcyra, which was destroyed during the second world war.

The Vjosa now cuts a narrow passage between high mountains in a 10 km long gorge from which Këlcyra takes its name. In Roman times it was known as the *Fauces Antigonenses*, after the town of *Antigonia* which was situated the exit from the gorge, perhaps in the village of Cekël, near the confluence of the Vjosa and the Drin. The strategic importance of this defile remained constant from antiquity to the second world war.

After passing through this rugged gorge the traveller may be tempted to pause at the little café /res-

taurant of *Uji i ftohtë* ("Cold Water"), situated below the road on the left in a verdant setting, amid cool springs flowing down to join the Vjosa.

We now come to **Tepelena,** which also occupies a very important situation, commanding the two principal valleys in southern Albania, since the Drin, coming from Gjirokastër, joins the Vjosa here. The present citadel is built on earlier foundations; it was given its present form by Ali Pasha (1740-1822), also known as Ali of Tepelena, who was born in a village in this area.

The road then follows the Drin valley, passing on the right the village of **Kardhiq.** The inhabitants of this village had gravely offended Ali Pasha's mother and sister during his childhood, and he took his revenge more than thirty years later by burning down the village and fearfully torturing and killing its people. Above the village are the ruins of a medieval fortress which was rebuilt by Ali Pasha.

In the village of **Mashkullora** a monument commemorates the battles fought by the local peasants against the Turkish army in 1908 during a rising led by Çerçiz Topulli. On the hills flanking the right bank of the Drin can be seen the ruins of the Holy Trinity fortress built by Ali Pasha in 1809 to watch over Gjirokastër, a few kilometres away. The local legend has it that it was built in a single night.

H. Gjirokastër

Gjirokastër is the principal town in the Drin valley. According to legend it was founded by a princess named Argyros; but nowadays the name is usually derived from that of an Illyrian tribe, the Argyroi.

However this may be, the town appears in the records for the first time only in the late 14th century, when it belonged to the great Albanian feudal family of Senebish. In 1417 it was taken by the Turks. In 1812 it fell into the hands of Ali of Tepelena, who held it for some years. During a rising in 1847 the local peasants, led by Zenel Gjoleka, briefly occupied the town but were unable to take the citadel and were soon compelled to disperse. The town was coveted by the Greeks, on the pretext that there was a Greek-speaking minority in the region, and during the second world war it was successively occupied by Italian, Greek and German forces. Ismail Kadarë has described this period in the history of his native town in his book *Kronika në gur* ("Chronicle in Stone").

Gjirokastër was also the birthplace of Enver Hoxha, who gives an excellent description of the town in one of his last works, *Vitet e regjelisë, Kujtime cër Gjirokastrën* ("Years of Childhood: Memories of Gjirokastër").

The town's principal museum is the **National Museum of Arms,** housed since 1971 in the old citadel which lowers over the town from a strong strategic situation under the slopes of *Mal i gjëre* (the Broad Mountain). It was rebuilt by Ali Pasha and is well preserved in spite of the destruction of the aqueduct which supplied it with water (illustrated in an engraving by Edward Lear, who visited the town in 1848). Some remains of the aqueduct are still to be seen above the Manalat district.

The best way to reach the citadel is on foot, up the steep streets of the town. This will allow you to appreciate the truth of Ismail Kadarë's remark:

"This must be the only place in the world where, if you slip off the side of the street, you may land on someone's roof." Reaching the top of the hill, you enter a large vaulted hall, dimly lit, containing numerous guns of various calibres, a tank and a whole series of heavy arms taken from the Greeks, Italians and Germans during the second world war.

The development of weapons in Albania from the Stone Age to the present day is illustrated in a series of rooms. Most of the material dates from the most recent period, but many visitors will be more interested by the splendid weapons of the 18th and 19th centuries—guns, pistols, yataghans and daggers, richly inlaid in gold and silver.

The citadel was used as a prison by King Zog and later by the occupying forces, and visitors are shown the cells in which prisoners were confined, including the sinister dungeons, with the half effaced inscription "Gott mit uns" at the entrance, in which the Nazis kept their political prisoners, in deliberately damp conditions and in almost total darkness.

Gjirokastër has a number of other interesting buildings, notably the late 18th century **Bazaar Mosque** and **Medrese,** built on an unusual plan which includes a vaulted public passage.

There are other museums, including in particular the **Museum of the National Liberation War** in the Palorto district, housed in Enver Hoxha's birthplace, a very interesting example of the local type of house. Nearby is the **Museum of Material Culture,** in a very handsome mansion the restoration of which is approaching completion: note particularly the chim-

neypieces, woodwork and ceilings, which have been treated with meticulous care.

On a hill in the centre of the town is the **Qendra Kulturore Muzcali,** a cultural and music centre. It includes the building occupied by the *Liria* Albanian school from 1909 to 1913, now a museum of education, and a number of old houses commemorating various political, cultural and dramatic societies established before the war. The idea of creating this complex came from Enver Hoxha, who had been secretary of one of the societies. From the little garden, containing an obelisk with carvings illustrating the connection between education and patriotism, there are fine views of the town and surrounding area. Another good viewpoint is the terrace of the café beside the Educational Institute. The best way of seeing the town, however, is by walking up and down the steep and narrow streets of the **Palorto** and **Manalat** quarters with their many old houses, most of them well maintained. With this fascinating ensemble of fine old buildings Gjirokastër fully justifies the style of **qytet-muze** (museum town) which it was officially granted in 1961.

I. Gjirokastër to Saranda

Leaving Gjirokastër on the Saranda road, we can see in the distance, beautifully situated amid handsome cypresses, the old **Teqe of Melan,** near which are the scanty remains of the ancient city of *Hadrianopolis* and the fine **church of Peshkopi,** which dates from the 11th century.

The road runs up the upper valley of the Drin, the Dropull, a fertile and well cultivated plain surrounded

by bare hills, on the slopes of which are a series of villages, perched high for safety in a region which for so long was insecure.

At **Dhuvjan** (12 km from Gjirokastër) a road goes off on the left to **Libohova,** a pretty and verdant village which was the favourite residence of the famous Shanishane, sister of Ali Pasha. The ruins of a small citadel which she built can still be seen. This road also leads to *Labova e Kryqit*, with the remains of the Illyrian stronghold of **Paleokastër** and a fine church dating from the 10th century, St Mary's.

Near Jorgucat, 20 km from Gjirokastër, the road bears right. Straight ahead are the little thermal resort of **Glina,** whose slightly sparkling mineral water is drunk all over Albania, and the hamlets of Vodhina and Bodrisht, where important discoveries of Illyrian material have been made.

The Saranda road climbs in sharp bends to the Muzina pass, through limestone hills with well marked tilted strata. The road continues through poor maquis country. Its monotony is relieved by a number of natural phenomena, like the pyramids of red sand on the right of the road and, also on the right, the *Syri i kaltër* ("Blue Eye"), a small polje lake in which a trout hatchery has been established. Another curious feature is a long strip of absolutely bare ground running in an almost dead straight line from horizon to horizon across the scanty vegetation of the maquis. This feature, due to a difference in the nature of the soil, has given rise to a picturesque legend. It is said that a giant dragon swallowed a donkey delonging to a local peasant; but the donkey was laden with tinder, which caught fire in the dra-

gon's stomach, and the heat thus produced destroyed the vegetation as the dragon crawled across the hillside in quest of water to quench the fire.

The river Bistrica supplies the *J. V. Stalin* and *Bistrica II* hydroelectric stations, which can be seen to the left of the road.

The road continues past **Dhrovian,** where there is a salt-mine. Its church of St Nicholas (16th century) is of some interest.

To the right of the road, 45 km from Gjirokastër, is **Delvina,** a small town in a verdant setting which is the administrative centre of the region and was a staging point for caravans during the Turkish period. It has the ruins of a small fortress established by Ali Pasha.

After the village of **Vllahat** is the *Vurgu de Delvinë*, a plain which was formerly marshy but has become extremely fertile since the rivers which flow through it have been tamed. The main crops is rice, but there is still some stock-farming, particularly sheep, which are renowned for their quality. To the left can be seen the very beautiful **church** of **Mesopotam.**

The water of the Bistrica, canalised, supplies a number of trout hatcheries as well as serving the needs of irrigation.

We then come to the junction with the road to Konispoli and turn left along it to the large village of **Finiq,** home of a considerable Greek-speaking minority. Its ancient name, *Phoinikon*, is thought to refer not to the Phoenicians but to a kind of palm-tree called *phoenix.*

Once the chief town of an Epirote tribe, the Chaones, Phoenikon became capital of Epirus in the 3rd cen-

tury B.C.; it is referred to by Polybius and Strabo among other ancient writers. Here in 205 B.C. was signed a short-lived peace treaty between Rome and Philip V of Macedon. The town retained some importance in the Middle Ages, when it was the see of an archbishop, but the Turkish invasion brought its ruin.

There are substantial remains of the acropolis. The walls, still standing 7 m high in places, point to a highly sophisticated scheme of town planning.

Excavation of the site, begun before the second world war, has brought to light a very handsome little treasury of the 4th century B.C., a 3rd century cistern, a considerable number of ancient tombs and an early Christian baptistery which seems to have been built on the foundations of a pagan building.

Returning to the road junction, we continue for a few kilometres on the main road, which then climbs gently up the hill separating Saranda from its hinterland.

Saranda, the "pearl of the Albanian Riviera", takes its name from a monastery dedicated to the Forty Martyrs (in Italian *Santi Quaranta*), the last traces of which disappeared during the second world war. It was a place of no real consequence during the Ottoman period: the administrative centre of the region was Delvina, where the caravans from Vlora or Ioannina stopped. To the south of the town can be seen the ruins of a citadel built by Ali Pasha.

Nowadays Saranda's harbour sees little shipping, and the town is mainly a holiday centre, offering the attractions of its situation above the head of a charming bay sheltered by the Greek island of Corfu, the

warmth of its water, the mildness of its climate and a record number of hours of sunshine (2900 annually). Saranda's sunsets are justly famous. The traditional evening promenade takes place along the quay with its palms and oleanders and its very agreeable and welcoming café.

In Roman times, under the name of *Onchesmus*, this was a place of some importance. In the centre of the town there is still a section of the wall built for protection against the barbarians in the 3rd century A.D., and near this are the ruins of an early Christian basilica with an interesting mosaic. The local museum, built round a large mosaic recently discovered, contains various objects recovered by excavation in the area and provides information about a number of sites which are difficult of access. Another mosaic has recently been discovered near the tourist hotel.

On the seafront promenade is the **Museum of Education** *(Muzeu i Arsimit)*, which recalls the time when Naim Frashëri, the great poet of the *Rilindja*, lived in Saranda as a customs official.

Beyond Saranda the road follows the coast for some time, with fine views of Corfu. It then turns inland and crosses the Çika Canal *(Kanali i Çikës)*, which taps the water of the Bistrica and thus makes availiable for cultivation a large area of land which was previously marshy. By diverting some of the water which formerly flowed into Lake Butrint, however, this has had the unfortunate result of increasing the salinity of the lake, with damaging consequences for the local fauna.

After passing a pumping station the road comes to Lake Butrint. The numbers of stakes which can be

seen in the lake are used in connection with the culture of mussels.

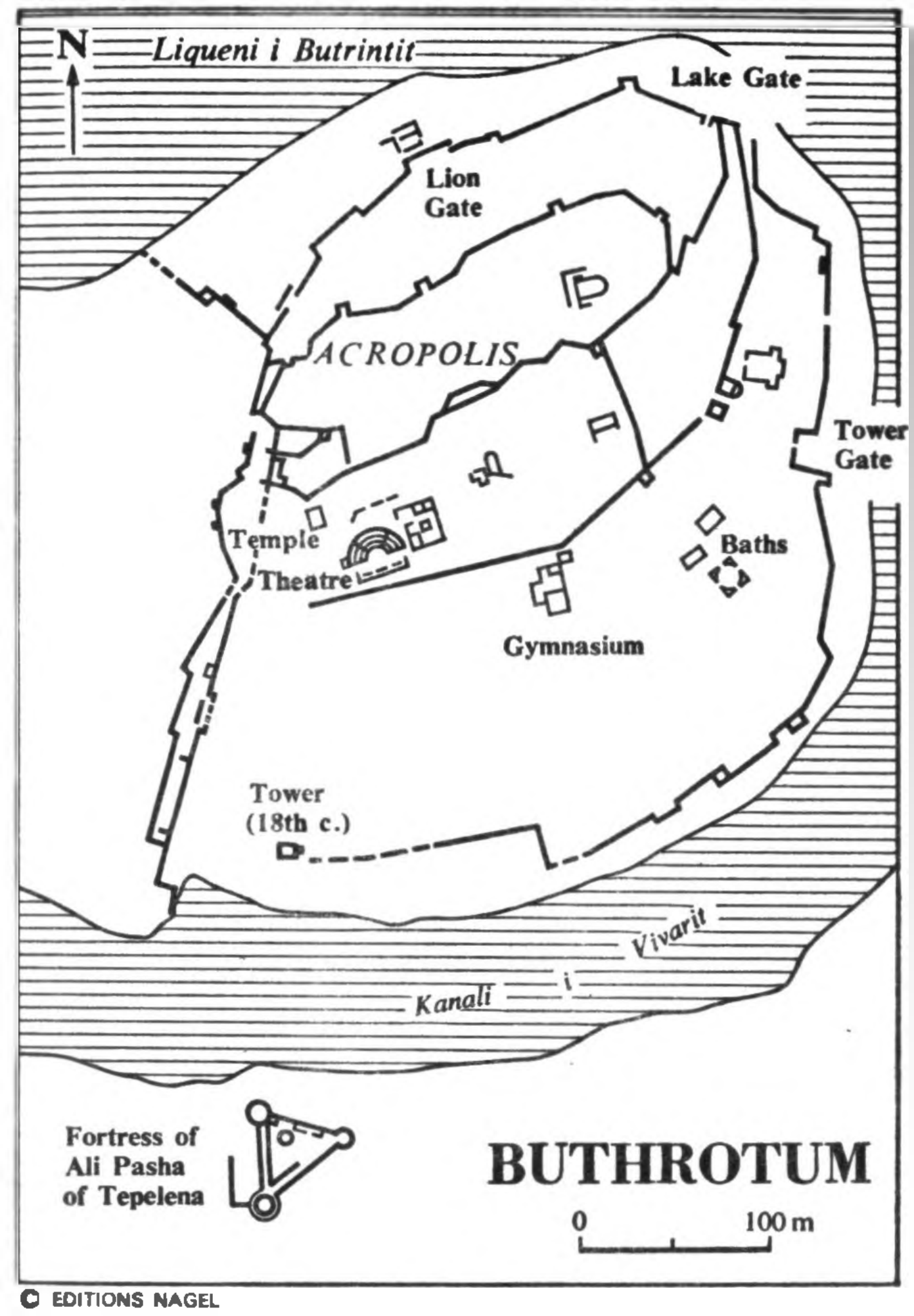
The road now returns briefly to the sea. To the right is an orientation table showing the layout of the Ksamil peninsula, which separates the lake from the sea. Beyond this are large plantations, recently established, of citrus fruits and olives. These belong to the **Ksamil** state farm, which also has a beautifully situated little restaurant where visitors can sample the local mussels as well as excellent fish. The beach which surrounds it lies at the head of a small creek enclosed by three small islands covered with lush green vegetation. The view from here, with Corfu's highest peak (Mt Pantokrator, 906 m) as backdrop, is one of the finest in Albania.

The road comes to an end, 16 km from Saranda, at a large roundabout looking on to a natural canal linking Lake Butrint with the sea. On the other side of the canal, straight ahead, is a ferry linking up with a metalled road to **Konispol.** To the left is an old Venetian fortress, and beyond this, at the outflow of the canal into the sea, are some remains of a customs post set up here by Ali Pasha.

Butrint archaeological site

This is one of the most important archaeological sites in Albania. The ancient city is frequently referred to by the classical writers. Virgil (Aeneid III, 292-293) attributes its foundation to the Trojans, who are supposed to have settled here after the destruction of their city.

The area has certainly been settled since very early times. Excavation has brought Neolithic material to



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light, and the foundations of part of an enclosure wall which are still visible evidently date from the Illyrian period. In the 6th century B.C. settlers from Cercyra (Corfu), itself a colony founded by Corinth, established themselves here. The settlement developed rapidly, and was sufficiently important to be mentioned by the geographer Hecataeus (5th century). It soon lost its independence and was incorporated in the kingdom of Epirus, but its prosperity was unaffected. Nor did it suffer from the Roman conquest, and the town is mentioned several times in the correspondence of Cicero, who, in a letter to Atticus, compares it with Antinea. The barbarian invasions reduced Butrint to a fortress, which passed successively to the Normans, the Hohenstaufens, the Angevins and the French, who occupied it briefly after the treaty of Campo Formio (1797). They were driven out by Ali Pasha, after whose death Butrint passed to the Turks, who held it for less than a century.

Entering the site through a gate, we follow a path marked by two antique columns, passing on the right the substructures of a Roman tower and a much restored Venetian tower which controlled both banks of the canal, and then continue through a wooded area on a path flanked by handsome trees, including eucalyptuses. In summer the rasping sound of the cicadas is deafening.

The path turns right into a more open area in which, beyond the remains of private houses, are the auditorium and stage buildings of a well preserved Roman theatre, surmounted by the remains of a temple of Aesculapius. The whole complex is built against the steep slopes of an acropolis which was fortified in many different periods.

We now pass in front of public baths of the 4th century B.C. The road, which is not particularly well signposted, turns right past the Wall of the Agonothetes and a Roman basilica, later converted into a church, with mosaic pavements in the nave and part of the left-hand apse. This brings us to the baptistery, probably one of the most important remains of the past in Albania, with mosaic pavements of the greatest interest.

Beyond this are another bathing establishment and a large basilica in an excellent state of preservation which is believed to have been built in at least two stages (6th and 7th centuries).

We then pass in front of a nymphaeum (fountain-house) and, bearing left, along the town walls, the substructures of which, in large dressed blocks, date from the Illyrian period. We come to a gate, with the posts of the sentinels who controlled entry to the city. Entrance was by a staircase, the first steps of which are still visible. The stone beams supporting the lintel of the gateway are overpoweringly impressive.

On the lakeside can be seen traces of an ancient warehouse re-used as a cemetery in the early Christian period.

A second gateway gives access to a well from which girls drew lustral water before their marriage. The marks left by the ropes used to draw up the water can be seen on the coping, along with a Greek inscription recording the use of the well. It was originally roofed with a dome, a fragment of which is still visible.

A third gateway has a lintel with a relief of a lion devouring an ox, which has been interpreted as a

warning to anyone seeking to force an entrance. This very low gateway gives access to a ramp, originally enclosed between two walls, which climbed gradually to the upper level.

A Venetian castle on the upper level was almost completely rebuilt by the Italian archaeological mission which worked on the site between the two world wars.

A number of objects found on the site can be seen in a small cloister and a room in the castle. They are mainly statues of the 1st and 2nd centuries, many of which were transferred to Italy. The site's greatest treasure, the head of a young woman known as the "goddess of Butrint", was restored to Albania when the Archaeological Museum in Tirana was opened, but it stayed in Tirana and the Butrint museum has to make do with a copy.

The upper part of the fort is laid out in gardens, and contains a number of Venetian and Turkish cannon. From the wall-walk there are wide views of the surrounding country, and it also offers a clear view of the layout of the ancient theatre.

A postern gate gives access to a flight of steps, awkward to negotiate but not dangerous, which lead down to the foot of the acropolis at the end of the path to the entrance.

J. Saranda to Vlora by the Albanian Riviera

Returning to **Saranda,** we take a road which runs up gently to the Gjashta pass, where for a time we lose sight of the Ionian Sea. We then run down into the extensive plain of *Rrëzoma*, whose lush green vegetation stands out against the bare mountains

bordering it to the east. A small Byzantine church can be seen on a low hill on the right, between the road and the river. In this direction, too, there is a good view of the acropolis of Finiq. The road now enters a sea of olive-trees and fig-trees and comes, 12 km from the Gjashta pass, to the Shën Vasij pass, which gives access to a natural region known as *Bregdeti* or *Bregu i Jetti* ("Shore"). For the next 70 kilometres the road affords magnificent views of the mountains and the sea, fully justifying the name of Albanian Riviera which has been given to this stretch of coast.

Beyond the villages of **Nivica,** a name pointing to a Slav settlement in this region, and **Përparimi** ("Progress", symbolising the country's future) is **Lukova,** where there is a large farm growing citrus fruits. A small monument to the right of the road, easily accessible and affording a magnificent view, commemorates Enver Hoxha's part in the establishment of the farm. The village of **Piqeras,** perched on a cliff, was the birthplace of Vasil Laçi, who tried to assassinate King Victor Emmanuel III at Tirana in 1940. This incident provided the theme of a powerful short story by Ismail Kadarë, *Perandori* ("The Emperor"), published in a collection of his stories *Qytet i Jugut* ("The City in the South"; recently translated into French).

Borsh, 38 km from Saranda, lies in the plain at some distance from the sea and from a gorge cut through the mountains by the river Shushica. Its former port, **Shkalla,** is now a small seaside resort. Above the gorge can be seen the ruins of the citadel of Sopot, which from ancient times to the Ottoman period protected the town and the road which ran

up the Shushica valley to the hinterland in the Kurvelesh range.

5 km beyond Borsh the road briefly leaves the coast and turns inland. Straight ahead, and then to the right of the road, can be seen the village of **Piluri,** which, perched on the hillside amid terraced fields, offers the eye welcome relief in a desolate landscape. On the coast, between Qeparo and Himara, is the beautiful bay of Porto Palermo (the ancient *Panormus*), guarded by an interesting medieval citadel which was rebuilt by Ali Pasha. Unfortunately it can be reached only on a military road which is at present a prohibited area.

The road now returns to the sea, running down in a series of sharp bends, past terraced fields carefully irrigated by stone-built water channels, to **Himara Bay,** extending in a crescent between two rocky promontories. The name of Himara is now borne only by a small administrative unit, but in the past it covered a much larger area.

Himara consists of two parts, the district of Spila on the coast and the village proper, built on the hillside and extending up to the older part of the settlement, to the left of the road, which has two old churches, All Saints and St Theodore's, and a dilapidated medieval citadel with the ruins of a small chapel.

The road continues to climb, with a gradient of 20% at one point, affording views of the sea, some distance away, and some fine examples of pyramids of red sand. To the left of the road are two interesting little churches, St Nicholas's and the church of the Saviour. Farther on, also on the left, is the larger church of St Spyridon, which has a tall bell-tower

(a rare feature in this region), in course of restoration. All these churches have interesting frescoes.

The road now comes to **Vuno.** This village, clinging to the slopes of the Çika range, has the aspect of a small town. Unfortunately after the fire which devastated it during the second world war many of the inhabitants preferred to settle on the coastal plain; and accordingly St Mary's church and the houses round it (above the road on the right at the entrance to the village) have remained in a state of ruin. After passing a vaulted passage running under a house and giving access to a steep path to the upper part of the village we come to a flight of steps on the right which leads up to the small **Village Museum** *(Muzeu i fshatit)*, housed in a small cottage which has been excellently restored. It is now in course of rearrangement, but there is a magnificent view from the little terrace in front of it, surrounded by pines and fig-trees. Nearby, higher up, is the house-museum of the brothers Gogo and Kosma Nushi, local Resistance fighters.

Most of the men who left Vuno to seek work abroad, as many did from this whole region, went to France, particularly to the Lyons area. Gogo Nushi, for example, worked there for many years, became a member of the French Communist Party and edited an Albanian journal published in Lyons.

The road continues through wild country. To the left can be seen the village of **Iljaz,** occupying an isolated position on a hill between the sea and the road, with which it is connected only by a stepped track, with steps wide enough to be negotiated by animals.

8 km beyond Vuno is **Dhërmi,** which has been called the "pearl of the coast". Built on the slopes of the Çika range, which here reaches its highest point (2050 m), it is divided into two by a deep gorge. The slopes running down to the sea are planted with olives and citrus fruits. The very old church of St Mary, in the upper part of the village to the right, has frescoes of considerable quality. Round St Michael's church, to the left, are a number of well preserved old houses. Lower down are the church of Shën Mitri (St Demetrius) and another St Mary's church, both worth a visit.

5 km from Dhërmi is the village of **Palasa,** at the point where Caesar landed in 48 B.C. on his way to attack Pompey. The road now begins to climb to the Llogara pass, which marks the end of the Bregdeti region—and frequently also a change in the weather. There are magnificent views as the road rises above the sea and the coastal plain with its fruit plantations, contrasting with the almost completely bare hills on the inland side of the road. A few pines, which gradually become denser, mark the approach to the pass (1050 m), on the highest point of which stands a gigantic fir, known as the *pishë flamur* ("flag pine") and now scheduled as a natural monument, misshapen as a result of its battering by the winds which blow almost constantly here. The Llogara area, the densely wooded northern part of which is in marked contrast to its southern part, is now a National Park, which is as popular as Albania's five other National Parks (Lura, Divjaka, Drenova, Thetti and Dajti). On either side of the road, amid the pines, are the little houses of a holiday centre.

The road now runs down towards the Vlora plain and comes to a small triangular plain called Gryke (the Gorge). To the right can be seen the village of *Dukat i Vjetër* (Old Dukat), which has established a new settlement on the left of the road, *Dukat i Ri* (New Dukat). The two villages form a cooperative which is famed for the quality of its peaches. The abundance of its crops can be judged by the number of orchards which are passed on the road.

We now come in sight of the sea, which is bounded in front by the double mass, often shrouded in mist, of Sazan island and on the left by the hills of Karaburun (Turkish, the Black Cape), the peninsula, known in antiquity as *Cheraunia*, which separates Vlora Bay from the sea. It is the largest peninsula in Albania (15 km long, 3-5 km wide). Poorly supplied with water, almost without vegetation and practically uninhabited, it has a number of caves and creeks, some of which are for all practical purposes inaccessible except by sea, like the creek of Gramata, with inscriptions carved in the rocks by seamen who found shelter there in a storm; the oldest inscriptions date from the 4th century B.C.

At the head of the bay and the base of the peninsula is the little town of **Orikum** (Greek *Orikos* or *Orikon*), founded by settlers from Euboea. It is referred to in the 5th century B.C. as a place of some commercial importance, and in the 4th century even began to mint its own coins. It was conquered by Alexander the Great, and was the starting point of Caesar's operations against Pompey in 48 B.C. It was destroyed by an earthquake in the 2nd century A.D. but was subsequently rebuilt. In the Middle Ages it was known as *Jericho*, and for a time was held by the

Angevins. During the Turkish period it was renamed *Pashaliman* (the Pasha's Port). It has considerable remains of a theatre of the 1st century A.D., Near the site is the 12th century church of Marmiro, which is believed to have served as a model for the church of Zvërnec monastery.

The road now runs through extensive orchards belonging to the Tragjas cooperative, which is noted for its peaches, and crosses the stream of Izvori, which contains trout of a particularly delicious species. It then comes to *Uji i ftohtë* ("Cold Water"), a wooded spot on the coast with many springs and numerous cafés affording beautiful views of the bay.

K. Vlora

Vlora, known in antiquity as *Aulon*, is mentioned by Pliny in the 2nd century A.D. It benefited from the decline of Orikos in the 4th century and became the see of a bishop; but it too suffered from the barbarian invasions and does not reappear in history until the 11th century, when it was taken by the Normans. After being briefly occupied by the Venetians during the fourth Crusade it passed into the hands of Manfred of Hohenstaufen and then to Charles of Anjou and the Serbian king Stephen Dušan. On Stephen's death in 1355 Vlora gained its independence, which it enjoyed for only a brief period until its capture by the Ottomans in 1417. The Ottomans made it chief town of a district and the base for their invasions of Italy in 1480 (when they held Otranto for a year) and 1536. Thereafter the town flourished as a commercial and industrial centre. In 1812 it was taken by Ali Pasha. After the declaration of Albania's independence it became

the seat of the provisional government until the accession of Prince William of Wied in 1914, when the capital was transferred to Durrës. Vlora was occupied by the Italians in December 1914 with the deliberate intention of using the town and its hinterland as a base for further operations in Albania, but they were compelled by a popular rising in 1920 to withdraw, retaining only the island of Sazan, which was of obvious strategic importance. The town remained an active political centre, and it was here that the series of demonstrations protesting against the assassination of Avni Rustemi began—demonstrations leading to the 1924 revolution which briefly overthrew the government of Ahmed Zogu, the future King Zog.

The town is entered on a broad avenue lined with palm-trees and bougainvilleas. On the left is the new bathing station *(pash i ri)*, on the right a continuous plantation of olive-trees. The road now comes to a large roundabout with a statue of Hysni Kapo, vice-president of the Council of Ministers and secretary of the central committee of the Communist Party. The house in which Ismail Qemal proclaimed the independence of Albania on 28 November 1912 is to the left, in the **Skela** district, which, as its name indicates, is the port quarter of the town.

We then continue along a spacious avenue lined with modern buildings and decorated with statues. The town lies to the left of this avenue. To the right can be seen *Vlora Sot* ("Vlora Today"), a permanent exhibition, and the theatre. A road goes off on the right, winding its way through olive-groves, under which large numbers of refugees from northern Albania, destitute and in great distress after being

driven from their homes by the first Balkan war, found temporary shelter in 1912. The road then climbs a hill, Mt Kuzbaba, on top of which is the *Liria* ("Freedom") restaurant, with a magnificent prospect from its terrace. On the seaward side there is a view of the whole of Vlora Bay, bounded by the Karaburun peninsula and the rocky hills of Narta, with the island of Sazan closing the horizon. On the other side the view extends to the fortress of **Kanina,** which dates from the Illyrian period. The town shared the destinies of Vlora, which it protected on the landward side, but at times had a life of its own: thus in the 13th century it was the centre of a bishopric which received important privileges from the Byzantine Emperor Andronicus II. Immediately below can be seen the old town of Vlora, which is concentrated in this area, several kilometres from the port district of **Skela.** One of the most prominent buildings is the **Xhamija e Muradies** (Mosque of Murad), a domed mosque and minaret built by an architect of Albanian origin, Mimar Sinan. An inscription dates it to 1542. The columned porch has disappeared, but the elegant north entrance has survived. The interior is also finely decorated. The mosque now houses the **Vlora District Museum of Architecture.**

Sinan is also credited with the construction of a citadel situated on or near the site of the present stadium. It is believed to have been built in 1531 at the behest of Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent, using building materials from ancient *Aulon.*

Near the mosque can be seen a number of old houses in Justin Godart Street, named after a French politician of that name who espoused the cause of the young Albanian nation after the first world war.

A short distance away is the Independence Monument (1972), by the sculptors Kristaq Rama, Shaban Hadëri and Muntaz Dhrami.

L. Vlora to Fier

Leaving the town, the road affords on the left, beyond the railway line, fine views of the sea. In 5 km a road goes off on the left to **Narta,** a little town famous for its wine, and **Zvërnec,** a small village situated at the foot of a hill which was inhabited from ancient times and was known in the Middel Ages as *Spinarica*. It passed into the hands of the Angevins and then of the Hohenstaufens (13th-14th centuries), when it became a commercial centre of some consequence. Its prosperity declined at the end of the 14th century, when the town was incorporated in the despotate of Epirus, and was destroyed by the Ottoman occupation in 1417. From this period there survives, on an island in the lake (or rather lagoon) of Narta, a Byzantine monastery, attractively situated amid cypresses. The frescoes with which the interior of the church is covered are of great interest. Also of interest is an 18th century tomb in the narthex.

The isthmus on which Zvërnec stands is called *Treportet* ("Three Gates"). The Narta lagoon was formerly linked with the sea by three channels separated by two rocky hills, but two of these are now silted up, leaving only the most northerly of the three still open.

The road now comes to the village of **Panaja.** To the left a large salt-pan extends for several kilometres, dotted with tall pyramids of salt; to the right are the fields and orchards of Llakatund farm, which is famous for its peaches. Leaving the Narta lagoon

just before the village of **Novosela,** the road and railway cross the river Vjosa on Mifol Bridge *(Ura e Mifolit)*. In antiquity this was a staging point (*Stefana*) on the road between Apollonia and Aulon, and a number of archaeological discoveries have been made here.

The canal from the Vjosa to the large village of **Levan,** to which we now come, was the first stage in the draining of the marshland of the Myzeqe area, through which the road has been running for some kilometres. The district takes its name from the great Muzakaj family, which held it from the 13th to the end of the 15th century. The last of the Muzakajs, John, retired to Naples, where he published in 1510 his *Historia e genealogia della casa Musaccia,* a work of great value for the history of Albania. This plain, the largest in the country, extends in a great triangle from the Narta lagoon to Elbasan and from the river Shkumbin and the Karavasta lagoon to the sea. A distinction is made between the Myzeqe of Vlora (extending to the Vjosa), the Little Myzeqe or Myzeqe of Fier (between the Vjosa and the Seman) and the Great Myzeqe (between the Seman and the Shkumbin). Apart from a few hills rising to about 200 m the Myzeqe consists of alluvial soils brought down by the rivers, which formerly meandered freely, forming marshes or marshy meadowland which covered some 70% of the area. It was occupied—apart from Labe or Vlach shepherds who spent the winter here—by small numbers of Lales, a tribe which long remained extremely backward (ploughs with wooden shares were still in common use in 1939), decimated by malaria and subjected to a rigorous feudal regime: for example, the beys

prohibited their peasants from having fireplaces in their houses, compelling them to light fires on the beaten earth floor of their cob-walled cottages, leaving the smoke to escape through a hole in the thatched roof. The draining of the meadowland and the reclamation of the marshes, begun before the war by Mussolini's government with the object of providing land for Italian settlers but mainly carried out after the Liberation, have transformed the region into one of the most fertile areas in Albania. Malaria has been eliminated and the population, reinforced by Kosovans and Çams driven out of their homeland, has increased considerably.

The road climbs—almost imperceptibly after the steeper gradients of the mountain region—towards the Koshovia pass and comes to the village of **Cakran,** where important discoveries of prehistoric material (implements of flint, bone and horn, millstones, pottery kilns and pottery, underground or semi-underground dwellings, burials, etc.) have been made. The site is dated to the Middle Neolithic. Here too was discovered in 1978 a hoard of 2500 coins from Apollonia, Dyrrachium, Oricum and elsewhere.

After passing (on right) the *Gogo Nushi factory* (chemical fertilisers) and a thermo-electric power station (the largest in Albania, established here near the country's oilfields) the road enters Fier.

M. Fier

Fier is a modern town, probably founded originally by the Vrionis, the powerful beys of Berat, who had huge estates in this area and built during the 19th century a stone bridge over the Gjanica and a bazaar (designed by a French architect named Barthélemy).

The bazaar has disappeared, replaced by a public garden, but the residence of the beys still exists. Situated beside the Apollonia Hotel, it now houses the municipal library. Fier, now a well built town with a population of some 40,000, is famed as the scene of a rising led by Cerova against King Zog's government in August 1935. It is mainly of interest to visitors as the starting point of a trip to Apollonia.

Apollonia (12 km) is reached by taking the Seman road and in 8 km turning left into a side road to the village of **Pojan**; then, after passing through the village, turning left again. The road soon comes in sight of a monastery perched on the summit of a hill between the Kryegjata valley and the coastal plain. A fairly steep ascent leads up to a vaulted gateway.

In the courtyard of the monastery are the monks' living quarters, an arcaded stone building with pilasters on the ground floor and columns on the upper floor. On the ground floor a passage under the arcading gave access to various store-rooms; on the upper floor, reached by an open stone staircase, were the monks' cells and rooms for guests. These rooms are now used for displaying archaeological material and some of the antique statues recovered by excavation. Other statues, etc., are displayed in a ground floor gallery on the other side of the courtyard.

Adjoining this building to the south is the monks' refectory (*trapezaria*), built at the end of the 13th century in cloisonné masonry on foundations consisting of stones from ancient buildings. This was originally a church on a trefoil plan with semicircular apses, one of which disappeared when the church was incorporated, probably in the 18th century, in the

present building. It has a well lit interior with remains of frescoes.

Also on the south side is the campanile, built in 1928 to replace an earlier tower.

St Mary's church, in the centre of the courtyard, is one of the most important Byzantine buildings in Albania. It is entered through an exonarthex supported by eight columns with curious capitals carved with figures of monsters, perhaps showing western influence. In the exonarthex is a shaft, apparently cut through the base of an antique column, which opens into an underground cistern for storing rainwater: a very necessary provision, given the absence of any springs on the site of the monastery. Also in the exonarthex is a fresco, poorly preserved, of Andronicus II Palaeologus.

The exonarthex was a later addition, which gives a rather unusual aspect to the belfry over the west wall of the narthex.

The interior of the church is also unusual, being in the form of a parallelogram rather than a rectangle. In consequence the drum supporting the dome is slightly oval in shape. There is also an extra bay between the transept and the apse, showing an influence from the capital which is rarely found in Albania. This influence can also be detected on the exterior of the church, in the pentagonal form of the apse and the number of sides in the drum (twelve). This additional bay communicates on the north with the *skeuophylakion* (sacristy), also a rare feature in Albania.

The dating of the church has been the subject of much discussion. In the light of recent discoveries (the existence of an older fresco under the one now

visible, an inscription with the date 1250) it is now thought that building began in the first quarter of the 13th century but that there were considerable alterations in later periods.

Important as the site is from the point of view of Byzantine archaeology, the remains of classical antiquity are of even greater importance.

Apollonia was founded in 588 B.C., a few kilometres from the sea, on the banks of the river *Aoos* (now the Vjosa), which was then navigable, by settlers from Corinth or perhaps from Cercyra (Corfu), itself a colony of Corinth. The town developed rapidly and by the 5th century was minting coins which are found all over the Balkan peninsula. Perpetual conflicts with the Illyrians led to the town falling for a time under the control of the Taulantii, though its prosperity does not seem to have suffered from this dependency. In 229 B.C. it became subject to Rome and proved a faithful ally, and in recognition of its loyalty received a share of the booty after the defeat of Gentius in 168. During the Roman civil wars it sided with Caesar (47 B.C.) and continued to be, in

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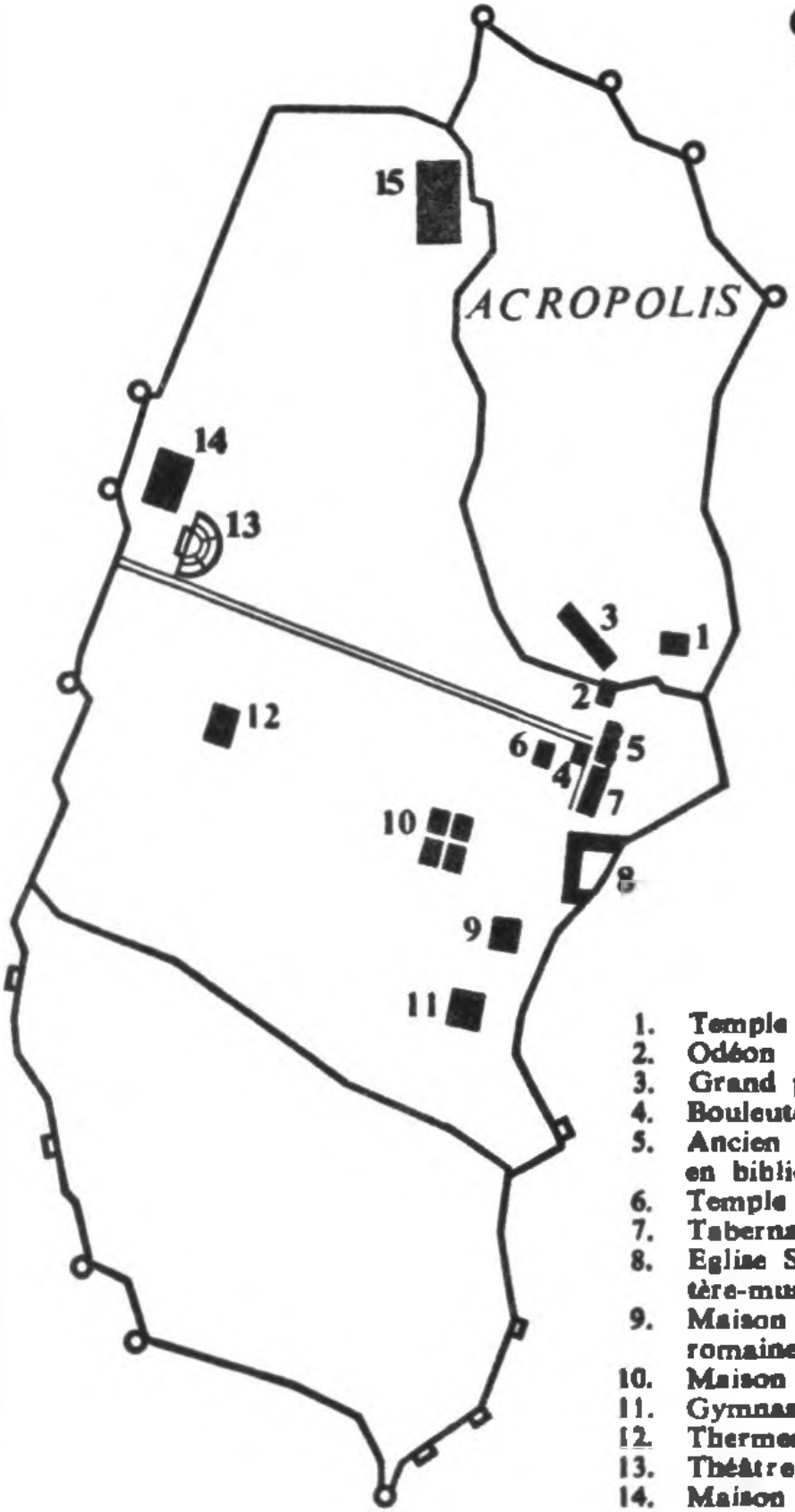
APOLLONIA

1 Temple of Artemis
2 Odeon
3 Large portico
4 Bouleuterion
5 Portico, converted into a library
6 Temple of Diana
7 *Tabernae* of Roman period
8 St Mary's church and monastery (museum)
9 House with atrium (Roman period)
10 House and street
11 Gymnasium
12 Baths
13 Theatre
14 House of 2nd-3rd century A.D.
15 Nymphaeum (fountain-house)

APOLLONIA



1. Temple d'Arthémis
2. Odéon
3. Grand portique
4. Bouleuterion
5. Ancien portique transformé en bibliothèque
6. Temple de Diane
7. Tabernae d'époque romaine
8. Eglise Ste-Marie et Monastère-musée
9. Maison à atrium (époque romaine)
10. Maison et rue
11. Gymnase
12. Thermes
13. Théâtre
14. Maison (II-IIIe s. ap. J.C.)
15. Fontaine-nymphée

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the words of Cicero in the *Philippics*, "*magna urbs et gravis*" ("a great and important city"). It was a city of merchants. but also of rhetors and philosophers. The future Augustus studied in Apollonia, and it was there that he heard of Caesar's death in 44 B.C. Around the 3rd century A.D. an earthquake moved the bed of the river several kilometres back and cut the city off from the sea. Thereafter it declined; and the barbarian invasions turned decline into total ruin.

The site of Apollonia was located in the early 19th century by Pouqueville and Leake. The first excavations were carried out during the first world war by two Austrian archaeologists, Prachniker and Schober, but the first systematic work on the site was done between 1924 and 1938, by a French archaeological mission directed by Léon Rey. Excavation was resumed in 1948 by Albanian archaeologists, notably Hasan Ceka and Skënder Anamali.

The French mission first brought to light two Roman houses (1924), and then (1930-38) the Bouleuterion or Monument of the Agonothetes (the meeting-place of the city's officials), the Odeon and a portico. Their Albanian successors began by clearing and restoring the obelisk in honour of Apollo. They then excavated the town walls in 1956, two houses with mosaic floors in 1958-60, the Fountain of Cephisus (mentioned by Strabo at the beginning of the Christian era: the only monument in Apollonia referred to by any classical writer) in 1969, the theatre in 1970—and the site is still a long way from having yielded up all its secrets.

The first circuit of walls, 3 m high and about the same in thickness, was built about the middle of the

5th century B.C. in large limestone blocks, carefully fitted together. The circuit, 2 km long, enclosed an area of some 25 hectares. The southern part, which served as a retaining wall for the city's sanctuary (*temenos*), is fairly well preserved. It has a very handsome pointed-arched gateway giving access, by way of a narrow passage, to the temple of Artemis within the *temenos*, the plan of which cannot be traced. The gate is flanked by two recesses, rough-rendered, designed for inscriptions. In front of it are a repository of large sacred amphoras and, to the right of this, the Obelisk of Apollo (3rd century B.C.), which stands 3 m high.

In the 4th century B.C. the city's growth made it necessary to build a new circuit of walls 4 km long incorporating the north-eastern section of the original circuit and increasing the area enclosed by the walls to 130 hectares. The new walls, built of brick on a stone base 3 m wide and 2-3 m high, stood 10 m high.

The centre of the ancient city lies to the north of the Byzantine monastery, between the monastery and the southern section of the 5th century walls, beyond the Roman houses already referred to. It forms a square, round which are the city's principal monuments.

The most notable feature is the Bouleuterion, which measures 15 m by 20 and stands 9.50 m high from the top of the seating to the highest point of the pediment. The façade, facing north, is still erect, with its white stone steps and its six marble columns with Corinthian capitals, the outermost columns being half engaged in the walls. A Greek inscription on the architrave records that the building was erected

by Quintus Villius Crispinus Furius Proculus in honour of his late brother.

In front of the Bouleuterion, at a slight angle, are four column bases, all that remains of a triumphal arch, one end of which was no doubt built against the next building.

This building (2nd century A.D.) is a portico which consisted of a Doric colonnade and a roofed passage behind it giving access to a series of semicircular recesses. The end of this portico was destroyed by the widening of the east-west street which runs in front of the Bouleuterion. About the same period a library, the brick walls of which are clearly visible, was built facing on to the new street, causing further destruction of the portico.

Opposite the Bouleuterion was built the Odeon (2nd century A.D.), with steps leading up to it, brick walls (originally faced with marble), stage and orchestra. It was a small building of very simple construction, measuring only 16 m by 11 and seating barely 600 spectators. In addition to the porch it had two side entrances, one of which, on the west side, communicated with the first of a group of three semicircular recesses, serving some religious function, which completed the layout of the square.

A second portico was then built on the hill, facing south-west, so that it offered, in addition to the afternoon sun, a wide prospect of the coastal plain and the sea. It was similar in plan to the earlier portico, with a colonnade, a spacious roofed passage and semicircular recesses containing statues. The west end of the portico may have been used in the 4th century as a place of Christian worship.

North of this, under the 5th century walls and near the point of junction with the 4th century walls, is the Fountain of Cephisus. This was supplied by a dam which stored water from the springs on the slopes of the acropolis. The water was then conducted by a system of terracotta pipes into a stone-built channel running into a basin whose façade was surmounted by five Doric columns flanked by two corner pilasters. The excellent state of preservation of the fountain is due to the fact that it was covered with soil by an earthquake about the middle of the 4th century A.D.

To the west of this is the theatre (2nd century B.C.), a good example of Hellenistic architecture but unfortunately much dilapidated. It could accommodate 7000 spectators. So far the stage and part of the orchestra have been excavated. Nearby are the remains of large houses of the 2nd and 3rd centuries A.D.

The area between the theatre and the Byzantine monastery contains no monuments of comparable importance. It is of interest, however, for the traces of the street layout and the remains of various buildings (baths, a gymnasium, private houses).

Another interesting excursion from Fier is to the **Ardenica monastery,** reached by taking the Lushnja road and in 12 km turning into a road on the left. The monastery is situated on the summit of a hill planted with cypresses, surrounded by an enclosure wall, which is entered on the south-east side, after a fairly steep climb, through a vaulted gateway like the one at Apollonia, beside which is an oil-mill.

The courtyard is in the form of an irregular triangle, round which are buildings containing the monks'

cells and rooms for guests. These are of two storeys (except in part of the north wing), with the rooms opening off corridors with stone arches on the ground floor and wooden columns on the upper floor.

The church, of basilican plan with a semicircular apse, has a flat roof, as is often the case in the Myzeqe plain. It has frescoes by the brothers Constantin and Athanase of Korça which include a figure of Jan Kukuzeli, an 11th century Byzantine musician, inventor of a system of musical notation, who came from Durrës. There are also icons by Constantin Shpataraku, notably one of St John Vladimir on which there appears a figure of a prince who is said to be a 14th century Albanian feudal lord named Charles Thopia.

The church has two porches, one at the east end and the other on the north side, a square modern campanile (1925) and a separate baptistery.

N. Fier to Berat

Leaving Fier, we take the road to **Tepelena,** running through the Mallakastër district, the chief town in which is **Ballsh.** This little town was of a place of great importance in the past: near the town are the villages of **Hekal** and **Klos,** sites of the ancient city of *Byllis* and its twin town *Nkaia;* and Ballsh, called

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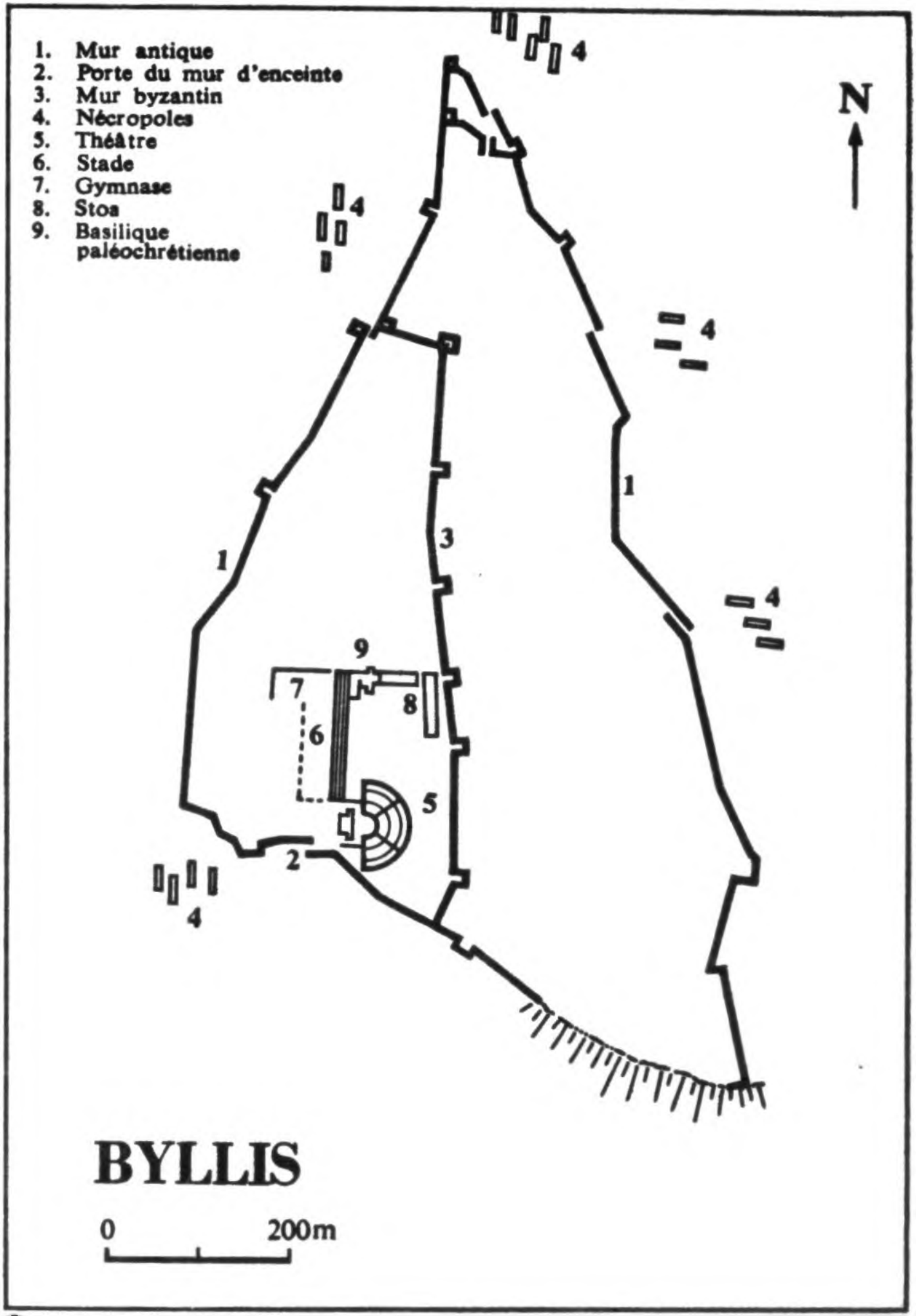
BYLLIS

1 Ancient wall
2 North gate
3 Byzantine wall
4 Cemeteries
5 Theatre
6 Stadium
7 Gymnasium
8 Stoa
9 Early Christian basilica



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Glavinica in medieval texts, inherited the episcopal see which Byllis had taken over from Apollonia. The remains of a richly decorated basilica of the 6th century were recently discovered here. Rapo Hekali, leader of a peasant rising against the Turks in 1847, was a native of the town.

A short distance before **Patos,** an oil town near the Illyrian site of Margëlliç (probably the ancient *Olympia*), we turn left into the Zharrëz road. In this area oil wells alternate with fields of cotton. The road comes to **Roskovec,** a large village noted for the quality of its tobacco.

To the right is the artificial lake of Kurjan, which has been stocked with fish imported from China known as *ballëgjerë* ("broadhead"). They are very prolific and easy to catch but not particularly good to eat.

At the hamlet of **Poshnje,** which has an old bridge over the Osum, we turn left in the direction of Berat and in another 4 km cross the Osum on the Oil Bridge *(Ura Vajgurore)*, formerly known as Hassan Bey's Bridge *(Ura Hassan Beut)*, and enter the Osum valley, which we follow to Berat.

A side road goes off to **Qytet Stalin** (Stalin City), formerly called *Kuçova*, Albania's oldest oil town, where oil has been worked since 1922. This was the scene in 1936 of a large strike, ruthlessly repressed, against the Italian company which held the concession. The road to Qytet Stalin passes on the right the village of **Perondi,** which has a fine Byzantine church.

The main road continues to Berat, which it enters after passing a turkey farm on the right and a textile factory on the left.

O. Berat

Berat, one of the oldest towns in Albania, lies on the river Osum at the point where it enters the Myzeqe plain. It is a picturesque sight, with its citadel to the left, its houses extending over both banks of the river and the majestic bulk of Mts Tomor and Shpirag as backdrop.

Originally the chief town of an Illyrian tribe, the Dassaretes, it was known in antiquity as *Antipatras*. The Emperor Theodosius II (408-450) renamed it *Pulcheriopolis* in honour of his sister Pulcheria, the great enemy of the Nestorian and Eutychian heresies. Finally the Slavs gave it the name of *Beligrad* (the White City) which it still bears, altered to Berat. The Byzantine Empire recovered it from the Bulgars, from whom it passed to the Hohenstaufens. The Angevins coveted it but were unable to gain possession of it. After being occupied by the Serbian king Stephen Dušan it fell into the hands of two great feudal lords, first the Muzakaj family and then the Balshaj family; then in 1417 it was occupied by the Turks. The citadel held out against the Albanian rebels of the 19th century as it had held out against Skanderbeg in 1455. Finally it was at Berat that the provisional government of the new Albania was formed in October 1944.

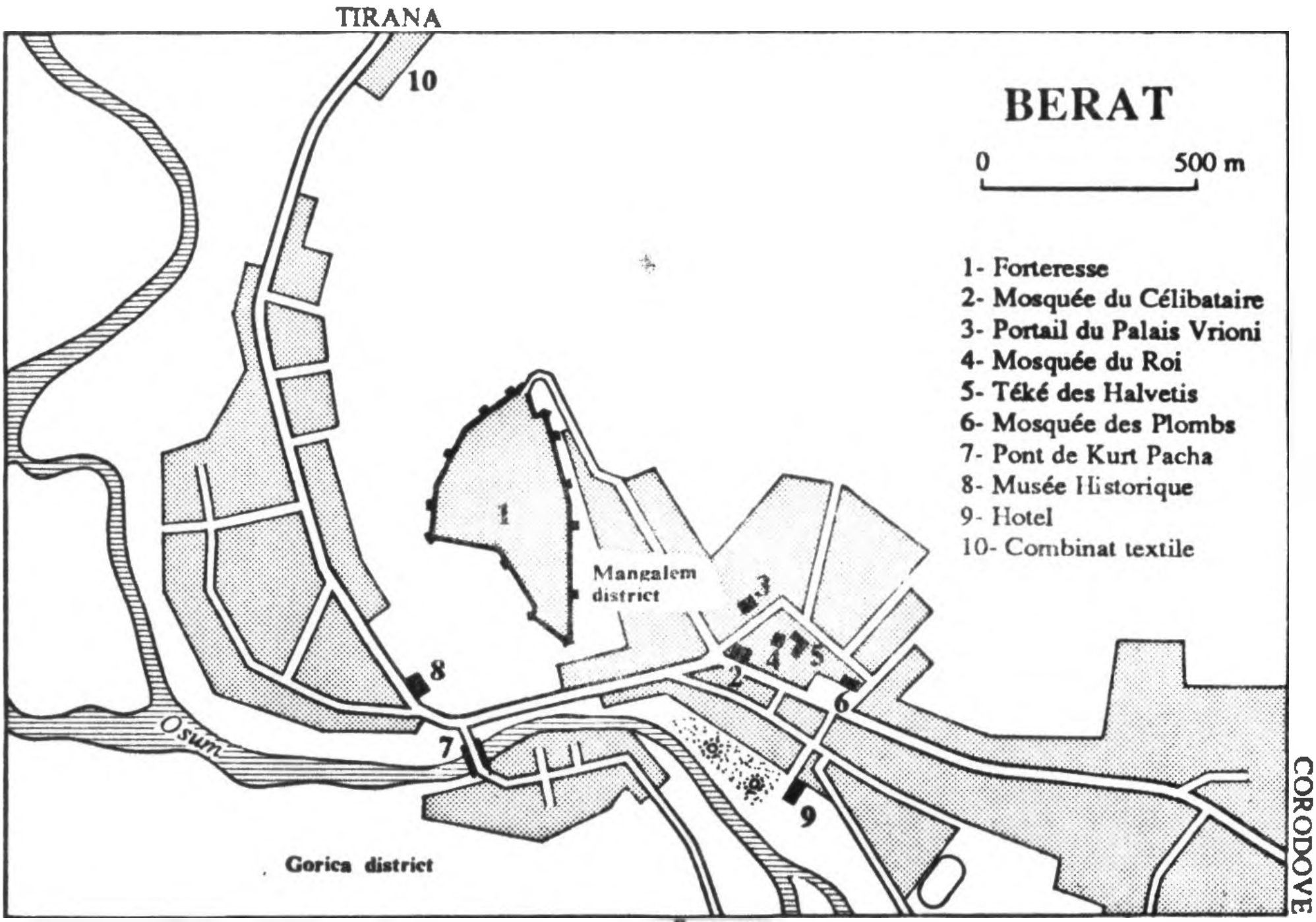
The citadel is situated on a naturel escarpment which is accessible only on the south-east side. The entrance gate can be reached by car either from the far end of the town on the Tirana road or from the town centre. The ramparts are still in good shape, and it is possible to walk round them, with magnificent views. The population of the citadel was Christian, and it had only one mosque, for the use of the

Turkish garrison, of which there survive only a few ruins and the base of the minaret. Near the entrance, after a guard-house (in course of restoration), is the little **church of St Theodore,** with frescoes by Onufre the Great, a 16th century Albanian painter. Next we come to the former cathedral of St Nicholas, which has been well restored and is now a museum dedicated to Onufre. The adjoining buildings contain, on two floors, works not only by Onufre but also by other Albanian religious painters, including his son Nicholas. There are also numbers of icons and some fine examples of religious silversmith's work (sacred vessels, icon casings, covers of Gospel books, etc.). Some of these are copies and not originals: for example the Berat Gospels, which date from the 6th century, are preserved in the National Archives in Tirana. The church itself has a magnificent iconostasis of carved wood, with two very fine icons of Christ and the Mother of God. The bishop's throne and the pulpit are also of considerable quality.

A few paces away, preceded by a small garden, is the tiny church of St Mary of Blachernae (13th-14th centuries), which has frescoes by Onufre's son Nicholas (end of 16th century). Behind the choir of the church is one of the cisterns which supplied the town with water during the many sieges to which it was subjected.

BERAT

1 Fortress
2 Bachelors' Mosque
3 Gateway of Vrioni Palace
4 King's Mosque
5 Teqe of the Helvetis
6 Lead Mosque
7 Kurt Pasha's Bridge
8 Historical Museum
9 Hotel
10 Textile combine



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We now walk down to a street running round the ramparts and lined with old two-storey houses, in many of which the upper storey overhangs the lower one. This leads into a small tree-planted square, on the hillside above which is the Holy Trinity church. Built on a Greek cross plan, this also dates from the 13th-14th centuries and has interesting frescoes. It has been meticulously restored.

There are other churches, all out of use, but these are of less interest. The church of St George has been converted into a restaurant and has a pleasant terrace. Outside the ramparts is St Michael's church (13th century), which is worth a visit both because of its situation and because of its careful restoration. It is reached by a steep but perfectly safe path.

The parts of the town below the citadel had a larger Moslem population. Here too there are a number of interesting buildings, now converted into museums.

Near the street running down from the citadel is the *Xhamija e Beqarëve* (Bachelors' Mosque), built in 1827. This has a handsome portico and an interesting external decoration of flowers, plants, houses, etc., resembling the decoration of the Mosque of Etem Bey in Tirana, which is slightly earlier (paintings completed in 1823). The word *beqar*, which literally means "bachelor", here refers to the young shop assistants (in practice generally bachelors) whom the

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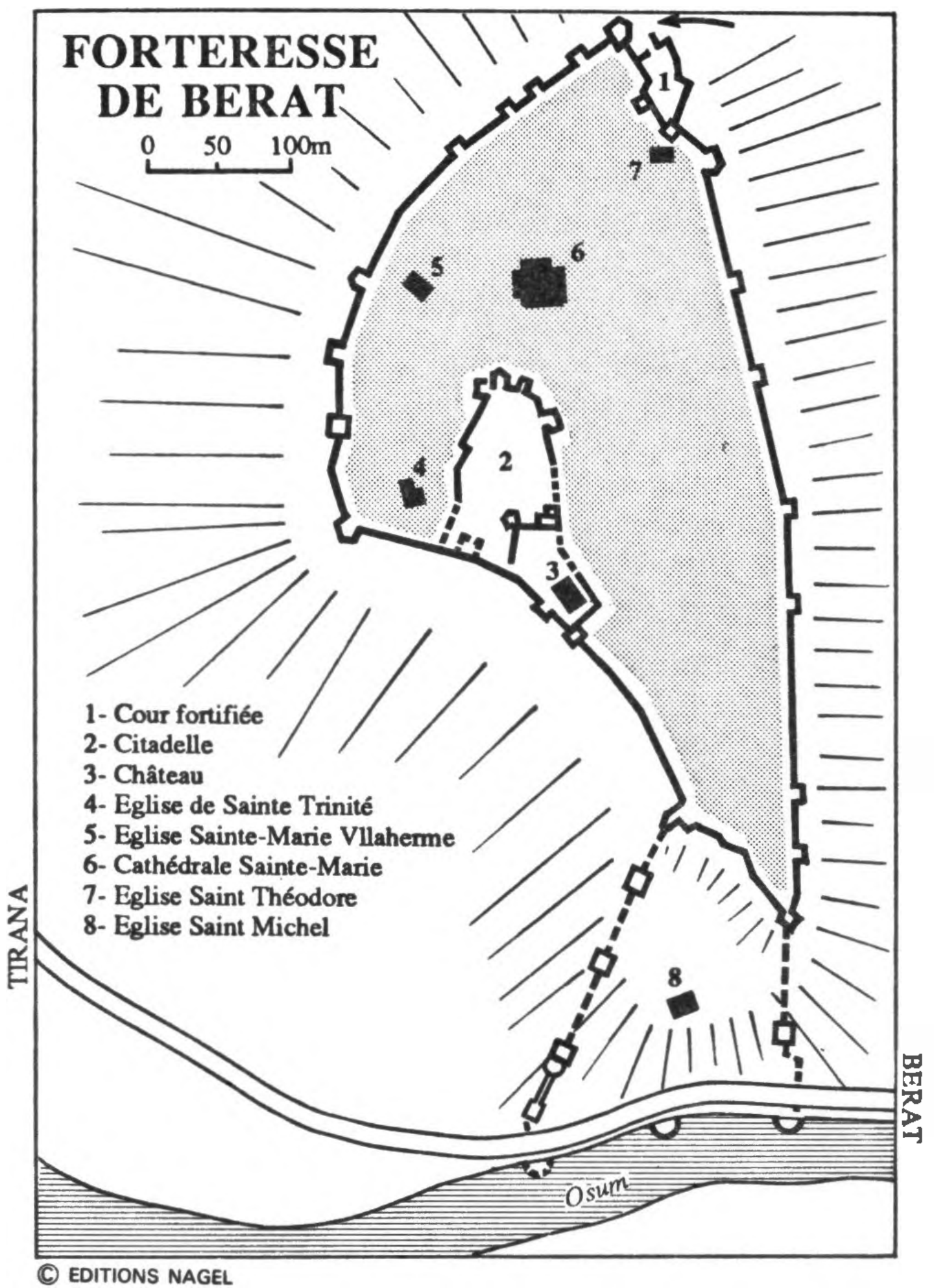
FORTRESS OF BERAT

1 Forified courtyard 2 Citadel 3 Castle 4 Holy Trinity church 5 Church of St Mary of Blachernae 6 St Mary's cathedral 7 St Theodore's church 8 St Michael's church



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merchants—in Berat as in other towns—used as a kind of private militia. The mosque now houses the **Museum of Material Culture.**

The *Xhamija e Mbretit* (King's Mosque), the oldest in the town, built in the reign of Bayazid II (1481-1512), is notable for its fine ceiling. It is now an archaeological museum, which contains among other things a useful relief plan of the citadel.

Near the King's Mosque is the **Teqe of the Helvetis** *(Teqe e Helvetive)*, of 1790, with a handsome porch and a carved and gilded ceiling. There are plans to convert it into a luxury hotel. A handsome old house, now in course of restoration, lies between the teqe and the **Art Gallery,** a modern building of rather questionable architectural value.

There are a number of other interesting buildings: the 18th century Clock Tower *(Kulla e Sahatit)*, which is very similar to the clock towers of Tirana, Peqin and Kavaja; the gateway of the old palace of the Vrioni family; and the cinema in which the provisional government of Albania was formed in October 1944, now housing a small museum. There is also a seven-arched bridge, built by Kurt Pasha in 1780 but now disfigured by modern parapets, which still gives access to the outlying district of **Gorica** on the other side of the Osum, its attractive houses climbing up the lower slopes of Mt Shpirag. This hill is slashed by numbers of parallel valleys which have earned it the name of the "striped mountain" *(mali me vija)*, while Mt Tomor, which faces it, has a rather battered and much indented look. Legend attributes this difference to a fight between the two hills, in which Tomor slashed Shpirag with a sword, while Shpirag used a club.

P. Berat to Tirana via Durrës

This route leaves Berat on the road from Fier (Route N), turning into a road on the right just after the hamlet of Poshnja. This road passes on the right the junction of the rivers Osum and Deroll, which here form the Seman, and the village of **Kozara,** which has a fine Byzantine church. After crossing the Seman it continues to **Karbunara,** birthplace of the *rilindas* Gjergji Karbunara, where the road from Fier to Durrës comes in on the left. It then comes to **Lushnja,** a small modern town of some 25,000 inhabitants. It was little more than a large village when a congress met here at the beginning of 1920 and asserted Albania's claims to independence and the integrity of its territory and declared Tirana its capital. The congress met in a house on the right of the road, now a museum.

We now turn right into the Elbasan road, which runs through the Dumre region, a tract of limestone country dotted with numerous small karstic lakes (85 in all, none of them larger than 100 hectares in extent), which combine with areas of woodland, pastureland and small fields to form a quiet and peaceful landscape.

Near the large village of **Belsh,** the traditional centre of the region, is **Gradishtë,** where excavation has brought to light considerable remains of the Illyrian and Greco-Roman periods. Lake Seferani has a temple of Aphrodite whose worshippers honoured the goddess by throwing terracotta votive objects into the lake. Belsh lay near the Apollonia-Scampa branch of the Via Egnatia.

After a side road on the right which goes off to **Cërrik,** where there is an oil refinery, we cross the Shkumbin, after which the road and the railway, bearing left, run together along the right bank of the river. The road, lined with handsome trees, affords views of the surrounding hills, on which reafforestation is in progress. The village of **Përparimi** (formerly called *Mahmutaga*) has some interesting ancient remains, notably of a bridge on the Via Egnatia.

We then come to **Peqin,** in Roman times a small trading centre (*Clodiana*) at the junction of the two branches of the Via Egnatia coming from *Dyrrachium* (Durrës) and *Apollonia* (Pojan) and heading for *Scampa* (Elbasan). Here can be seen the scanty remains of a Roman bath-house which was converted into a hammam in the Turkish period. The town also enjoyed a period of prosperity in the 18th and 19th centuries, the period of construction of a square citadel somewhat similar to the one in Elbasan. The mosque, which resembled the Mosque of Etem Bey in Tirana, has been destroyed, but the town still has a handsome clock tower.

The road continues to **Rrogozhina,** a small industrial town which may occupy the site of ancient *Asparagium*, where Caesar established a base before attacking Pompey in Dyrrachium. Here the Lushnja road goes off on the left, with a side road on the right to the little bathing resort of **Divjaka,** which has a sandy beach sheltered by pines. Near Divjaka are the Karavasta marshes, formed in the 17th century by the alluvium carried down by the Shkumbin and the Seman. In this area with its abundance of fish there is a pelican reserve.

Beyond Rrogozhina the road and railway run over a featureless plain, a former marshland area reclaimed for agriculture by the construction of a canal 42 km long which follows the road to **Kavaja.** This was one of the principal achievements of the first five-year plan (1951-55). The village of Tosa, to the right of the road, was established at that time to house the people who were to work the new land.

Kavaja, a small industrial town of 20,000 inhabitants, has preserved only its clock tower as a reminder of its past. The mosque has given place to a public park, and its handsome colonnade (re-using columns from Apollonia) is now in the Durrës archaeological museum, apart from one bay in the vestibule of Korça's museum of medieval art.

Soon after Kavaja, perched on a hill on the right above the cultivated plain, is a handsome old house which belonged to one of the great families who dominated the country for so long.

To the left is the little village of **Qerret,** which was occupied between the two world wars by refugees from Kosovo. A few kilometres farther on a road goes off on the left to the village of Golem and a jagged cliff known as the Rock of Kavaja *(Shkëmbi i Kavajës)* rising to a height of 100 metres above the sea. It was near this cliff, known in antiquity as *Petra*, that the indecisive battle between Caesar and Pompey known as the battle of *Dyrrachium* was fought in 48 B.C. It was here too that Robert Guiscard's Normans defeated the Byzantine Emperor Alexius I Comnenus on 18 October 1081.

Nearby is the site of *Mili i Robit*, which has yielded much material of the late Roman period, now in Tirana and Durrës.

The road now runs closer to the sea, affording fine views of the Gulf of Durrës, but turns off to the right just before reaching the town's bathing beaches.

A side road goes off on the left to the village of **Arapaj,** where remains of one of the largest early Christian basilicas in the country, measuring 60 m by 30, have been excavated. It has a fine mosaic dated to the 6th century. This is believed to be the church of St Michael which, according to Anna Comnena, was burned down by the Normans in 1081.

The road now follows the left bank of the Erzen through a landscape of gentle hills. To the left is the village of **Shesh,** which has two species of vines, *Shesh i zi* and *Shesh i bardhë*, yielding respectively red and white wines of excellent quality.

To the right is the village of **Peza,** where an important conference was held in 1942 to plan the fight against the occupying forces. The house in which it was held is now a museum. The road then crosses the Erzen, runs through the large village of **Vaqar** and enters **Tirana** by way of the plain (formerly marshland) of Yzberish. To the left can be seen the *J.V. Stalin combine*, a spinning and weaving plant, to the right the *Misto Mam combine*, which makes furniture, plywood, kraft paper, corrugated cardboard, matches, etc.

SECOND ITINERARY : TIRANA

Tirana, capital of Albania, lies in a small plain drained by the river Tirana *(lumi i Tiranës)*, a tributary of the Ishëm, whose valley forms the natural outlet from the town. To the west the *Kodra e gjatë* (the Long Hill, 491 m) bars the direct line to Durrës, which can be reached either by going round the north side of the hill (the Vora gap) or round the south side (the Erzen valley). To the east the plain is bounded by *Mt Dajti* (1612 m) and *Mali i Priskës* (1365 m), between which the Priska pass (850 m) offers a rather difficult passage through the hills. To the south are the Kërrabë hills, rising to 933 m.

The city covers an area of 31 sq. km and had a population in 1984 of 206,100 (far ahead of Albania's second largest town, Durrës, which has under 75,000 inhabitants).

The site has been inhabited since prehistoric times, as is shown by the Upper Palaeolithic material found on the lower slopes of Mt Dajti. The remains of a citadel have also been found, perhaps the stronghold referred to as *Tirkan* by Procopius of Caesarea in the 6th century A.D. Barletius, Skanderbeg's biographer, refers in the early 16th century to the plain of Tirana, which his French adapter, Jacques de Lavardin, describes a little later as "a spacious plain and of most pleasant aspect". The modern town, however, dates only from 1614, when Sulejman Pasha Mulleti built, on a site now occupied by the monument commemorating the partisans who fell in the liberation of the town, a mosque (which survived until the last war), public baths, an oven and a number of shops. The town developed rapidly,

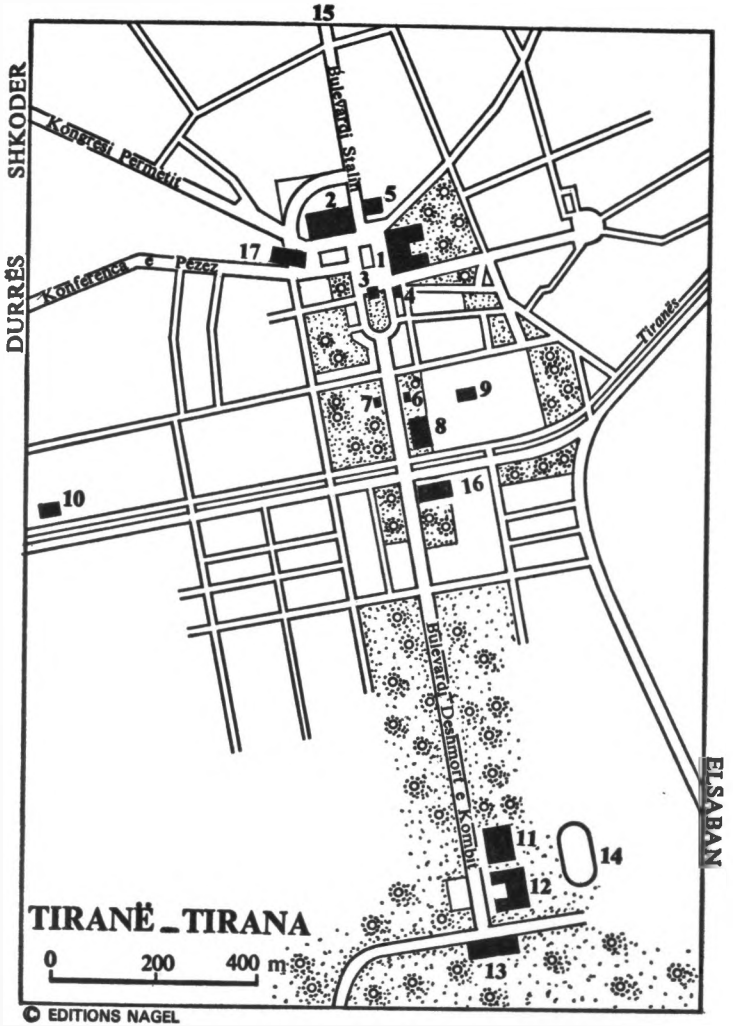
and is referred to by the celebrated Turkish traveller Evliya Celebi in the middle of the 17th century. Its heyday, however, was in the 18th and early 19th centuries, and the city's principal surviving monuments date from this period.

The troubles following the death of Kaplan Pasha in 1816 half ruined the town, and rule by the Toptani family, and particularly by the last of the family, the megalomaniac adventurer Esat Toptani, did little to improve the situation. In 1920, when the Congress of Lushnja decided to move the capital of the country from Durrës to Tirana, the town had barely 10,000 inhabitants, less than half the population of Korça or Shkodra; and it had only just caught up these towns by 1938.

Insecurity resulting from the war led many families to seek refuge in Tirana. It was questionable whether they were any better off there, for the town suffered from the exactions of its Fascist rulers and was liberated only after three weeks of bitter fighting, with heavy loss of life and property. The occupying forces finally abandoned the town on 17 October 1944 and the new government made its triumphal entry on the 28th.

TIRANA

1 Palace of Culture
2 National Museum
3 Skanderbeg Monument
4 Mosque of Etem Bey
5 Tirana Hotel
6 Lenin Monument
7 Stalin Monument
8 Dajti Hotel
9 Museum house
10 Albania Today Exhibition
11 Palace of Congresses
12 Archaeological Museum
13 University
14 Stadium
15 Railway station
16 Enver Hoxha Museum
17 Enver Hoxha memorial



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The town then had a population of 60,000. The rise in its population since then—which is in line with the increase in population in the country as a whole—is due among other things to the establishment of industry, of which there had previously been little. Tirana is now Albania's principal industrial centre, accounting for 20% of the national industrial product.

Among the most important industrial installations, in addition to the *Misto Mam combine* (timber, 1947) and the *Stalin combine* which have already been mentioned, are the *Ali Kelmendi foodstuffs combine* (1960), with more than 170 products (wine, beer, fruit juices, oil, confectionery, canned fruit and vegetables, etc.), the *Josif Pashko combine* (building materials, 1965), reinforced by a brickworks established in 1973 which supplies 35% of the national output, a meat and milk processing plant (1973) and the *Enver Hoxha combine* (1978), which produces motor vehicle and tractor spare parts for the whole of the country and is preparing to start building lorries.

Craft production was well developed in Tirana, particularly in the old bazaar, which before the war was one of the town's tourist attractions. Its traditions are now carried on by the *Migjeni* art products enterprise, founded in 1966 on the basis of earlier cooperative organisations, which produces articles in wood (brier pipes, marquetry), filigree work (jewellery, small caskets), copper and alabaster, as well as embroidery, silk articles, etc.

Even before the Liberation town planning schemes were prepared for Tirana by Italian architects. Their projects sometimes had undesirable consequences:

thus in 1930 the laying out of Zog I Boulevard (now Stalin Boulevard) involved the destruction of the Karapiçi mosque, whidh had paintings of the highest interest. On the other hand it is perhaps a pity that planned redevelopment of the ministry quarter was interrupted by the war.

The fighting during the liberation of the town brought further destruction. The gravest loss was the old mosque built by Sulejman Pasha, with its fine colonnaded portico and interior decoration and the adjoining tyrbe containing the remains of its founder.

The new government was thus faced with a considerable task, and its proposals were elaborated in a town plan worked out in 1952-56. One feature of this was the laying out of **Skanderbeg Square.** On the east side of the square is the **Palace of Culture** (1966), the building of which involved the destruction of the old bazaar. This contains a number of halls, the largest of which can seat 1000 spectators, and also houses the National Library, which possesses 850,000 volumes (compared with 3000 when it was established in 1922). There are also facilities for temporary exhibitions. On the north side of the square is the *Tirana Hotel* (1979), the country's largest hotel, with 324 rooms; it was also Albania's first high-rise building. Most of the west side of the square is occupied by the imposing bulk of the **National Historical Museum** (1981). On the south side is the Skanderbeg Monument, with an equestrian figure of the national hero (by Odhise Paskali, Andrea Mano and Janaq Paço), erected in 1968 on the 500th anniversary of Skanderbeg's death. It stands in a small square surrounded by a number of uniform

buildings erected in the reign of King Zog to house various ministries.

From here a wide shady avenue, *Dëshmorët e Kombit* (Martyrs of the Nation), runs south. This is the scene of the people of Tirana's evening promenade, the traditional corso.

On the left of the boulevard, facing one another, are statues of Lenin and Stalin. One is by a Russian sculptor, Tomsky, the other by an Albanian sculptress, Kristina Koljak. Also on the left is the **Art Gallery** *(Galeri e arteve figurative)*, built in 1976. In addition to a number of foreign paintings this contains works by such fine Albanian painters as Kolë Idromeno (1860-1939), who worked in almost every artistic discipline, Zef Kolombi (1907-49), who was mainly a draughtsman but also painted, and above all Vangjush Mio (1891-1937). Notable representatives of the period of socialist realism are Abdurrahim Buza and Guri Madhi. The sculpture of the *Rilindja* period is represented by Murat Toptani (1868-1917), who was also a painter, a poet and a politician. The contemporary period is dominated by Odhise Paskali, director of the gallery for many years; but other sculptors are also represented by works of high quality in bronze, marble and wood.

Beyond the *Muzeu Historik Kombëtar* is the **Teatri i Estrades** (Variety Theatre), which puts on comedies, revues, operettas, etc.

Also on the left of the boulevard is the *Dajti Hotel*, an older establishment which remains prestigious and is notable both for comfort and cuisine. Facing it is a large public park, with a kiosk offering refreshments, and sometimes dancing in the open air.

Also in the boulevard is the **Enver Hoxha Memorial,** opened in 1988 on the 80th anniversary of Enver Hoxha's birth. It was designed by a group from Study and Planning Institute No. 1 led by the architects Klement Kolaneci, Pranvera Hoxha, Piro Vas and Vladimir Bregu. On the highest point of the building is a star, from which rays descend towards the façade, symbolically representing, along with the other architectural volumes, the eagle on the Albanian flag, the national emblem. Inside, the museum is in the form of a spiral rising towards a central architectural space. In the centre, opposite the entrance, is a statue of Enver Hoxha by the sculptor Kristaq Rama.

The museum illustrates Enver Hoxha's upbringing and training, his role as strategist of the struggle for national liberation, his contribution to the union of the people in the National Liberation Front, the establishment of the new regime, the creation and modernisation of the army, the development of the economy and the formation and application of the country's foreign policy.

We now cross the Marcel Cachin Boulevard, named after a French Communist leader (1869-1958) who was well thought of in Albania.

The avenue, lined by severe-looking office buildings, ends in a handsomely proportioned square laid out with fountains, on the far side of which, approached by a monumental flight of steps, is **Tirana University,** flanked on the right by the **National Archaeological Museum.** Behind the museum is the *Qemal Stafa Stadium*, with facilities for both football and athletics (track 400 m long); enlarged in 1971, it can now accommodate 20,000 spectators. To the right is the

old Opera House, now the **College of Art.** Beyond this is the large park already mentioned.

The city's surviving older buildings are concentrated in a small area near Skanderbeg Square. The most important of these, the **Mosque of Etem Bey,** is at the south-east corner of the square. Begun in 1794 and completed in 1821, it is notable for the elegance of its proportions, the grace of its minaret (polygonal on a square base) and the quality of the paintings, sheltered by a portico, on the outer walls on the north and east sides. The adjoining **Clock Tower** dates from aroun 1830; brick-built, it is 35 m high.

Some 100 metres away, in the Street of the Barricades, is the early 19th century **Tyrbe of Kaplan Pasha,** with graceful columns and carved capitals. A short distance beyond this are the old **Tanners' Bridge** *(Ura e Tagakëve)* over the Lana, a tributary of the river Tirana, formerly a swift-flowing stream but now canalised, the Academy of Science, housed in a former royal palace, and the remains of the 18th century mansion (*konak*) of the Toptani family, the restoration of which is under consideration.

A little to the left of the Street of the Barricades, at the corner of Bardhok Biba Street and Bajram Curri Street, is a shop, now occupied by the Flora bookshop, which at the beginning of the second world war served as cover for Enver Hoxha, under the guise of proprietor of a tobacconist's shop. It is a rare surviving example of an old Tirana shop.

Tirana is not only Albania's political capital and its leading industrial city: it is also its principal cultural centre. It has, therefore, numerous museums and other cultural institutions. The most important of the museums are the following:

— **National Historical Museum** *(Muzeu historik kombëtar)*, situated on the north side of Skanderbeg Square beside the Palace of Culture. One of the key elements in the replanned city centre, this is a handsome building with the country's largest mosaic on its façade, representing *Shqipëria* (Albania). It has the most modern facilities and equipment (for example, it is the only museum in Albania with air-conditioning).

The ground floor is devoted to prehistory and antiquity. Here are displayed some items of first-rate importance, like the mosaics from Mesaplik (with a figure of Aeolus) and Durrës (the "beauty of Durrës"), statues from Apollonia (a head of Demosthenes) and Butrint (the "goddess of Butrint"), etc. The Arbëresh culture is also well represented. A number of very clear maps make it easier to understand the background.

The first floor is devoted to the period from the 12th to the 17th century. Particularly notable are some handsome examples of weapons.

The second floor brings the story down to 1944. Among items of particular interest are some beautiful 19th century costumes, a reconstitution of a traditional reception room *(oda e miqve)*, a bust of Ismail Qemal and weapons and personal mementoes of the country's leaders and martyrs, illustrating the beginnings of the communist movement and the second world war.

We now return to the first floor, devoted to the history of socialist Albania, the achievements of which are displayed in the form of a number of excellent models.

— **National Archaeological Museum,** near the University. It has a collection of some 1800 objects

dating from the prehistoric period to the 19th century, arranged in chronological order, with clear explanations. The Illyrian period, with by far the richest collection of material, is subdivided geographically.

— **Shqipëria Sot** ("Albania Today"), a permanent exhibition housed in a modern building (1970) in Marcel Cachin Boulevard. This is predominantly an industrial exhibition, with examples of machinery and equipment of all kinds produced in Albania and many scale models, but it also devotes space to agricultural, social and cultural achievements. There is a small hard-currency shop.

— **Exhibition of Popular Culture** *(Ekspozita e kulturës popullore)*. After some excellently presented explanatory panels this museum displays numbers of very beautiful and interesting objects—tools and implements, traditional machines, costumes, weapons, etc. There are also reconstitutions of a shepherd's hut, a filigree workshop, etc. The last cases display modern objects reflecting national traditions.

— **Lenin-Stalin Museum,** established in 1954 in ar over-ornate modern building. Its ten rooms, on two floors, offer a traditional presentation of material —a thousand documents, including photographs, copies of documents, pictures, sculpture and newspapers illustrating the life and work of Lenin and Stalin from the birth of the one to the death of the other.

— **Party House and Museum,** opened in 1949. This is the house in which the Albanian Communist Party, now the Albanian Party of Labour, was founded on 8 November 1941. Hidden away in a narrow street behind blank walls, it is a good example of a traditional Tirana house with its roof of large red

tiles, its colour-washed walls and its little garden containing a well shared with neighbouring houses —a convenient arrangement which facilitated communications for those engaged in underground activities. On the ground floor is the room in which the meeting was held, now restored to the state it was in on the night the Party was founded. Visitors are also shown the kitchen implements used by the participants in the meeting, who, using a concealed staircase, spent the night in a room upstairs, beside the master bedroom. There is also a secret recess under the floor in which compromising documents could be hidden if need be.

— **Youth House and Museum,** opened in 1949. This little house, even more modest than the preceding one, belonged to Sabrije Vokshi, who inherited a fierce patriotism from his family, which came from Gjakova in what is now Yugoslav Kosovo (Sulejman Vokshi was one of the leading members of the League of Prizren). Sabrije was very ready, therefore, to put her house at the disposal of the founders of the Albanian Communist Youth movement. Visitors are shown the little room which Qemal Stafa used as a photographic laboratory during his clandestine activity.

Surroundings of Tirana

The standard excursion from Tirana is to Mt Dajti. A good asphalted road leads in 27 km to the heart of this little range of wooded hills. There is no access, however, to its highest point (1612 m), on which is the main relay station of Albanian Television. The whole northern part of the range, extending to the

beautiful limestone gorges of *Shkalla e Tujanit*, has been declared a national park (area 3500 hectares). There is a small altitude resort, with a good hotel, which is busy both in summer and in winter.

THIRD ITINERARY : NORTHERN ALBANIA

A. Tirana to Kruja

Leave Tirana by the Boulevard of the Congress of Përmet and the Vora road and almost at once turn right. After crossing the railway and the river Tirana the road runs through the village of **Kamëz,** with the Institute of Agriculture, which, with its gardens, can be seen to the left. Beyond this, also on the left, can be seen the **Valias lignite mine,** one of the most modern in the country (deep-freeze working, etc.), then the Preza hills, under which is *Rinas airport*. Although the airport is on the near side of the hills the usual approach from Tirana goes round the far side.

21 km from Tirana is the village of **Fushë-Kruja,** at an important road junction. The road to the left leads to Rinas and Vora and from there to either Durrës or Tirana: our route follows the road to the right, leading to Kruja, 11 km away.

The existence of **Fushë-Kruja** is attested from the 16th century, when it was known as *Ura e Zezë* ("Black Bridge"), after the stream, the *Zeza* (Black River), which flows through the village. Its recent development is due to the establishment of a cement factory and various small agricultural industries. A small monument commemorates Shota Galica (the *nom de guerre* of Qerime Galica), a heroine of the fight in Kosovo against the oppressive policy of the Belgrade government, who died here in 1927.

Just beyond the village **Kruja** can be seen on the left of the road, perched on the mountainside above

a nearer range of hills. After passing a commemorative monument on the right the road begins to wind its way up through the trees (mainly olive-trees), with attractive views of the Ishëm valley to the left. Kruja reappears on the right, with its citadel visible far right. After passing a road going off to Burrel on the right we bear right on a road which climbs steeply to Kruja. At the entrance to the town, on the left, is an equestrian statue of Skanderbeg (by Janaq Paço, 1959).

The site, strongly situated at an altitude of 605 m above the plain, has been occupied since early times —on the evidence of recent excavations from at least the 3rd century B.C. It is not, however, as some have thought, the site of the Illyrian fortress of *Albanopolis* mentioned by Pliny, the remains of which are believed to have been found at *Zgërdhesh*, an hour's walk to the south. It is thought that the first circuit of walls at Kruja was built about the 4th century A.D. after the destruction of Albanopolis. Objects belonging to the Arbëresh culture (6th-8th centuries) have been found there.

The town is recorded in Byzantine sources in 879 as the see of a bishop. Later it became the capital of a local ruler named Progon, referred to as "archon of the principality of Arberia" (1190-99), and his successors. At the end of the 13th century its citadel was repaired by Charles of Anjou. Thereafter it passed to the Thopia family, who strengthened it still further. The Turks captured the place in 1396, were driven out soon afterwards but returned in 1415.

In 1443 Skanderbeg, having compelled the Sultan's secretary to put the official seal on a false *berat*

appointing him commandant of the stronghold, gained possession of it without striking a blow and made it his capital and the centre of Albanian resistance. Kruja withstood three sieges (1450, 1466 and 1467), the last of which was directed by Mehmet II in person, and the Sultan was unable to take the town until ten years after Skanderbeg's death (16 June 1478). He then destroyed it, massacred most of the inhabitants or sold them as slaves, and changed the name of the place to *Aksahissar*, the White Fort.

The town, which suffered further devastation in an earthquake in 1617, was repopulated only very slowly and became converted to Islam: the last reference to a bishop of Kruja is in 1694. Finally in 1832 the fortress was dismantled by Mehmed Reshid Pasha, who had just defeated the pasha of Shkodra, Mustafa Bushatli, and re-established the Sultan's authority in Albania.

The second world war destroyed part of the bazaar and most of the buildings within the citadel, in particular an early 19th century residence of the Toptani family noted for its magnificent decoration.

In 1938 Kruja had a population of only 4500 and its only industry was a small oil-mill. The production of olive oil is still an important local activity, but the craft production of carpets has been developed and there are numerous small agricultural industries. The population is now 11,200.

From the terrace of the tourist hotel, on the left of the road, there is a superb view. Lower down is the old bazaar, now carefully restored and housing the **Exhibition of Popular Culture.**

The **Citadel,** elliptical in form, has a perimeter of 800 metres and an area of 2.26 hectares. It is defended by nine towers and a triple vaulted gateway with a guard-post. In front of the entrance is a fountain decorated with an eight-pointed star and two animals rearing up on their hind legs, believed to be lions. Above this are two Turkish inscriptions of the 15th and 18th centuries.

To the south is a postern gate giving access to another fountain, now outside the walls but formerly fortified. To the north-east, the highest part of the site, is a square tower, which no doubt served as a keep, a watch-tower and a means of communication by optical signals with other fortresses in the area, particularly Petrela. Later it was converted into a belfry and then into a clock tower.

Beside this tower the remains of a church were discovered. Also within the citadel are the ruins of a hammam, the *Teqeja e Dolmes* (1789), a teqe with beautiful arabesque decoration, and a few old houses, one of which has a fine *çardak* (open gallery on the upper floor). This now houses an interesting **Ethnographic Museum.** There is also a small restaurant in the citadel, with fine views from its terrace.

A path partly hewn from the rock leads to the magnificently situated **Skanderbeg Museum** *(Muzeu i Gjergj Kastriotit-Skënderbeut)*, opened in 1982 (architects Pranvera Hoxha and Piro Vaso). At the entrance is a sculptured group (by Janaq Paço and Shaban Hadëri) representing Skanderbeg among his people.

A room decorated with frescoes by Zef Shoshi, busts and a variety of original objects is devoted to the Illyrian heritage. There is a larger range of objects in the room devoted to the Arbëresh period. A third,

lit by fine stained glass windows, contains material, notably busts and copies of manuscripts, of the late medieval period, from the foundation of the principality of Arberia to the Turkish invasion. A fourth room is devoted to Skanderbeg's ancestors.

The large central hall, on a basilican plan, gives the story of the Albanian people's struggle against the Turks under Skanderbeg's leadership. It is decorated with the banners of the principal families who fought with him, reproductions of old weapons and frescoes, notably a representation of "Skanderbeg's Testament" by Niko Progri. The hall ends in a semicircular apse in which the place of the altar is occupied by a cenotaph with reproductions of Skanderbeg's helmet and sword, the originals of which are in Vienna. The whole of the apse is covered by a huge fresco (by Naxhi Bakalli) symbolising the Albanian fight against the Turks.

On the first floor are models of Albanian fortresses in their original state and a room devoted to the last days of Albanian resistance after the death of Skanderbeg.

The hall on the second floor, containing busts or portraits (more or less imaginary) of the principal figures in the drama, is decorated with fine wrought-iron work.

Skanderbeg's international policy and his influence in Europe are symbolised, rather unexpectedly, by a "reconstitution" of the room in which he worked. There is also a library containing originals or photocopies of numerous books and other works about him. The last room is devoted to the influence of this Albanian epic in later centuries and down to our own day. Finally there is a terrace which justifies

Barletius's assertion that Kruja is the finest viewpoint on the Adriatic.

After seeing Kruja we return to the road from Fushë-Kruja to Burrel and turn right.

B. Kruja to Kukës

This road, sometimes hewn from the rock and frequently difficult, winds its way up to the Cudhi pass and then through beautiful pine forests to the Shtama pass (*Qafështama*, 1200 m), between the Suka hills to the south and the Skanderbeg range to the north, which reaches its highest point in *Mali i Liqenit* ("Mountain of the Lake", 1712 m). **Qafështama,** where marble quarries are worked, is a small climatic resort with a tourist hotel. The road then continues through mixed beech and coniferous forest to **Burrel,** chief town of the Mat region.

This little town of 8000 inhabitants was formerly best known for its prison, built during the reign of King Zog. It now has a plant for the treatment of chromium ore, opened in 1979.

Burrel is the capital of the **Mat,** a region in which old traditions are still very much alive (though its traditional industry, the manufacture of gunpowder, has been abandoned). In this area the old regional costumes can still be seen in everyday use—though now increasingly confined to the wearing of the traditional *qeleshe* (felt cap) by men and a kerchief covering the hair, with a point hanging low down on the back, by women.

Although Burrel appears in the records from the 15th century as a staging point on the road from

Durrës to Kosovo and Macedonia it has no monuments of tourist interest, apart from a memorial to the 1943 rising against the occupying forces, which secured the release of 200 detainees from the prison but was cruelly repressed, and busts of two local notabilities, Peter Budi and Mustafa Xhani. Peter Budi (1566-1622), bishop of Sarda (now Shurdah), is noted for his literary works, and was also a member of the group who tried to persuade the Pope to organise a crusade for the liberation of Albania. Mustafa Xhani (1910-47), *baba* (chief) of the teqe of Martanesh, made it a centre of anti-Fascist resistance. Later he became vice-president of the presidium of the People's Assembly and was assassinated by opponents of the regime.

Leaving the town in the direction of the Mat, we pass the **Historical Museum.** After a descent through beautiful scenery the road rejoins the river, crosses it and continues alongside it to the right. A side road to the left leads by way of Perlat, once the seat of the Dukagjin family, to Rreshën and on via Selishta to Peshkopi. We bear right towards the Buffalo Pass *(Qafa e Buallit)* and come to the industrial village of **Klos.** The road then leaves the Mat valley and begins to climb, passing a mountain road on the right to Labinot, on the Tirana-Korça road between Elbasan and Librazhd. Fine views to the left and then to the right. On the right can be seen a typical old house of the Mat region, with a *tyrbe* and a *kulla* (fortified tower), much altered but still recognisable and still inhabited. The road continues to climb, with beautiful views, to the Qarri pass and then descends by way of Bulqiza, with a factory (on right), to Zerqan. At a junction where a road runs

straight ahead through the Golloborda hills to Librazhd we bear right and come to **Shupenzë.** From here there is a fine view of the valley, on the slopes of which the characteristic outlines of a number of *kullas* can be descried. In the distance can be seen the houses of **Dibër** (Debar in Yugoslavia), the natural centre of the region, which unhappily was assigned to Serbia in 1913-14.

The road runs alongside the river Drin for a time, then crosses it and comes to the Dibër road, on the right, shortly before Maqellara. After a road on the right to **Herbel,** which has an interesting church, the main road continues through apple orchards, passes the village of **Melan** and comes to **Peshkopi,** the only real feature of interest in which is the **museum.** At present occupying rather inadequate accommodation in a number of old houses, it is due to move to new premises shortly. It has an excellent collection of local costumes, carpets, kitchen equipment and filigree jewellery, as well as a number of models of local architecture (in particular the Vizier's Bridge, which was drowned when the Kukës dam came into use).

The *Urfan Agolli state farm,* which has an area of 2500 hectares, produces mainly apples, pears, plums, etc. It has a viewpoint from which there is a magnificent prospect of the surrounding area.

The road now crosses the Drin again and comes to the junction with a road running east via Selishta to Burrel and Rreshën. Some distance beyond this is the village of **Kastriot,** which is attested as a possession of the Skanderbeg family from the 13th century: that is, since the family's first appearance in history—though it is generally believed to have

come originally from the Has area, above Kukës. After the village of Halës the road crosses a tributary of the Drin and comes to **Zall-Dardha** (43 km from Peshkopi), from which an attractive side trip can be made to Mt Lura, clad up to a height of 1600-1700 m with magnificent stands of beeches and, higher up, conifers. The highest point, a bare peak called *Kurora e Lurës*, rises to 2112 m; but most visitors will prefer to confine themselves to visiting the dozen or so lakes which occupy glacial cirques at heights of between 1200 and 1500 m, or at least the four principal lakes, the *Liqeni i madh* (Great Lake), *Liqeni i zi* (Black Lake), *Liqeni i luleve* (Lake of Flowers) and *Liqeni i lopëve* (Cows' Lake). A full day is required for this trip.

After Zall-Dardha the road begins to climb, with fine views to the right of the Drin gorges and the village of **Bushtrica.** It then runs down to the village of **Zall-Reç,** crosses the Drin, which flows into a gorge to the left, and then climbs again, with fine views to the left, into barren hills, with an occasional glimpse of a handsome *kulla.* Beyond the Kolesjan pass, near which are remains of the **citadel of Bushat,** and the road to Shistavec is the village of **Bicaj,** after which the road runs down towards Kukës and the plain. Just before entering the town there is a fine view, to the left, of Lake Kukës.

The full name of **Kukës** is *Kukës i ri* (New Kukës); for the original little town was engulfed in 1976 by the waters of the large artificial lake (area 72.5 km) formed to supply the *Drita e partisë* ("Light of the Party") hydroelectric station. The tourist hotel on the shores of the lake has a terrace from which there there are fine views of the lake; another hotel is

under construction on a low hill a little farther along the road. The **museum** on the edge of the lake contains interesting material on the transfer of the town to its new site. Here too there is a bust of Skanderbeg (by Odhise Paskali) set up to mark the 25th anniversary of Independence. In a little wood near the present hotel is a small café, with woodwork in traditional style and a terrace.

From Kukës the road runs east, with the lake on its right. Below the road can be seen a landing-stage used by the boats plying between Kukës and Fierza. From the bridge over the Drin there are wide views on both sides; then, after crossing a second bridge over a tributary of the Drin, the road begins to climb and turns away from the river to the left. It then comes to the village of **Kolsh,** where prehistoric remains have been found. To the left can be seen the village of **Kalimash** (rebuilt in 1978 after the original village was swallowed up by the lake) with its mine and its chromium enrichment plant. To the right there are beautiful views of the Drin. After a junction where a road which goes off on the right to Kryemadh we come to the Shtana pass (*Qafa Shtanë*) and run down through beautiful country to the village of **Shëmri,** where there are two copper mines. At Shëmri was the 18th century Vizier's Bridge *(Ura e Vizirit)*, now under the waters of Lake Fierza. 600 m long, it was celebrated for the lightness of its construction—though even before the war it was in such a dilapidated condition that people preferred to ford the river.

From here we take the road to the right, which leads to Bajram Curri and the Albanian Alps.

C. Kukës to Shkodra through the Albanian Alps

The road runs round the east side of a range of hills rising to 1584 m, the *Kunora e Dardhës* ("Crown of Dardha", from the name of a nearby village). It then passes the village of Arst (on right) and runs down in a series of sharp bends to **Lake Fierza,** with wide views.

The large village of **Fierza,** near which traces of a Roman road have been discovered, marks the end of the artificial lake of the same name, formed by a dam 166 m high, which supplies the *Drita e partisë* ("Light of the Party") power station. Opened in 1978, this has an installed capacity of 500,000 kW.

After crossing a bridge from which there is a superb panoramic view we follow the valley of the Valbona, which flows into the Drin just below the dam, and come in 8 km to the village of **Bujana,** birthplace of Mic Sokoli, a hero of the League of Prizren who died gloriously in the battle of Slivova (1818), hurling himself on the Turkish cannon. The house in which he was born, a very typical three-storey *kulla* (tower house), was opened as a museum in 1978. It contains mementoes of the hero, in particular his yataghan and his *xhamadan* (jacket) and documents on the history of the League of Prizren.

North-west of Bujana an enclosing wall of dressed stone marks the city of the **Illyrian citadel of Rosujë,** built in the 4th century B.C. on the frontier between the Labeates and the Dardanians. Excavation has yielded tools, pottery and coins which bear witness to fairly considerable activity from the Iron Age to the Christian era. The walls were rebuilt in the period of the invasions, but the site was abandoned in the 6th century.

8 km from Bujana is **Bajram Curri** (pop. 6000), chief town of the Tropoja region, still known by the name of the little town which was its capital until 1952, **Tropoja,** some 10 km north-east on the old road to Gjakova over the *Qafa e Morines* (Pass of the Poplars)—not to be confused with the pass of the same name on the Albanian-Yugoslav frontier between Kukës and Prizren.

Bajram Curri has various small foodstuffs industries. Its speciality is the production of the tasty prunes known as Tropoja prunes.

The town was known as *Kolgeçaj* until 1952, when it was renamed in honour of the great patriot Bajram Curri (1862-1925), who took an active part in all the various Albanian movements aiming at freedom and independence, from the League of Peja (1898) onwards. A sworn enemy of Ahmed Zogu, who had him condemned to death in 1922, he was one of the initiators of the 1924 revolution and took to the maquis after its failure. Having been tracked down and surrounded in the Dragobi cave, on the road to Valbona, he died gun in hand. In the town's main square is an imposing bronze statue of Bajram Curri (by Fuat Dushku); set off by its stepped base and the lawns which surround it, it stands 3.15 m high. A small museum displays personal mementoes and other evidence of his activity. There is also a bust commemorating Asim Vokshi (1909-37), a career officer and an anti-Zogist who fell in Spain in the Republican forces. A *gjakovar* (native of Gjakova) like Bajram Curri, he had lived for many years in Kolgeçaj.

Continuing on the road, we come almost immediately to Margegaj, administrative centre of the

upper Valbona valley. Bajram Curri's family came from a hamlet in this commune, **Koganaj.** In another hamlet, **Shoshan,** where there is a very picturesque spring *(Vrella e Shoshanit)*, the most abundant in the northern Alps, visitors are shown, in addition to the remains of a Roman fort, a mill which belonged to Bajram Curri.

The road continues to climb, running alongside the river, whose green waters are well stocked with trout, through forests of beech and sweet chestnut, mingled increasingly with conifers.

In a beech forest 15 km from Bajram Curri, to the right of the road, is the **Dragobi cave,** which was celebrated by the great poet Fan Noli: *Ti s'vdiqe, or Baba, as te Shkëmb'i Dragobisë* ("You did not die, O Father, either in the Dragobi cave or in the hearts of yougth").

10 km farther on is the little village of **Valbona,** situated at the entrance to an imposing cirque surrounded by bare and jagged mountains rising to over 2500 m. To the left is the group known as *Grykat e hapëta* (the Great Gorges), the highest peak in which (2525 m) bears the name of Ismet Sali Bruçaj, a local teacher who fell victim to his devotion to duty; to the right is *Mali i Kolatës* (2555 m); and straight head is *Mt Jezerca*, the highest peak in northern Albania (2694 m).

The motor road stops here, in a grandiose setting which is like the end of the world, and there is nothing for it but to return along the same road.

At **Shëmri** we take the road to the right, which runs up through beautiful pine forests to the *Qafa e Malit* (Mountain Pass, 933 m).

The road crosses the *Fan i madh* (Great Fan river) and follows its right bank. A few deciduous trees now begin to appear among the conifers. In the distance the characteristic outlines of a number of *kullas* can be distinguished. Nearer the road can be seen some typical local shingle-roofed houses, now unfortunately being increasingly replaced by less picturesque modern materials, asbestos cement or corrugated iron. The road to Iballa goes off on the right. Then, also on the right, can be seen the copper-processing plant of **Fushë-Arrëz,** a village mainly engaged in the sawing and working of timber. The trunks which can be seen from the road, piled up in the beds of mountain steams, are on their way to Fushë-Arrëz.

Soon afterwards a road goes off on the left to rejoin the Fan i Madh valley, traverse the whole Mirditë territory and join the main Tirana-Shkodra road near **Milot.** Our route continues straight ahead through forests in which deciduous trees, mainly sweet chestnuts and acacias, predominate for a time over the conifers. Just before the hamlet of Rrape is a commemorative monument from which there is a very fine view. Then, after a side road on the right to Kabash, we come to the little town of **Puka,** on the site of ancient *Epicaria.* The great poet Migjeni, who worked here, is commemorated by a small **museum.**

Beyond Puka a road goes off on the right to Qerret. Within this commune is the hamlet of **Koman,** where the first evidence of what is now known as the Koman culture—an important link demonstrating the filiation between the Illyrians and the Albanians—was discovered in 1898. Near here is the Malguni gorge,

in which is the *Enver Hoxha hydroelectric station*, the largest in Albania. Also within the commune of Qerret are the **ruins of the medieval fortress of Dalmacia.**

After running along the crest for some time, with fine views, the road runs down through increasingly barren country. A road goes off on the left to the curiously named village of *Kerthpula* ("dead hen"), where there is a kaolin quarry. To the right can be seen an artificial lake, the *Vau i Dejës;* straight ahead is the Shkodra plain.

A road goes off on the left to Lezha over the Zadrima plain, passing through the village of Kallmet, which has given its name to a variety of grape yielding a wine which ranks among the best in Albania. We take the road to the right, which comes in 33 km to the *Enver Hoxha hydroelectric station*, already mentioned, skirting the *Vau i Dejës* (Ford of Deja).

Here, on a hill on the right bank of the Drin, there remain only the ruins of a medieval castle with the remains of a 14th century church. There was formerly also an interesting Romanesque church with frescoes of high quality, but this was destroyed some years ago. In the Middle Ages, however, under the name of *Danja*, this was an episcopal see within the archbishopric of Tivar and the seat of a lordship which drew large revenues from the tolls levied on caravans crossing the ford on the Drin on the road between Shkodra and Prizren. There was a brief war for control of this ford between Skanderbeg and the Venetians, who gained possession of it in 1445 and held on to it until the Turkish conquest.

Near the Vau i Dejës is the site of *Sarda* (Shurdah), the see of a bishop in the Middle Ages, whose remains

now form a small island in the artificial lake. To the left of the river—or rather the lake—can be seen a copper mine, which is linked to the other bank by a suspension footbridge, the modern equivalent of the bridges still used in the area for crossing mountain steams.

The road now comes to the *Vau i Dejës dam*, built between 1967 and 1971, which stores 580 million cubic metres of water and powers four turbines producing 600,000 kW. The annual output can reach 2 billion kWh. The turbine hall was supplied by a French company, and two turbines are at present in operation. The road runs close to the artificial lake to reach the newly built power station.

This very important project was begun in 1978 and brought into operation (though not completely finished) in October 1985. Up to 6000 workers were employed on its construction, but only 30 technicians will be required to operate it. It is one element in a scheme for using the potentialities of the river Drin which involves transforming the whole course of the river within Albania, from the junction of the White Drin and Black Drin at Kukës all the way to Shkodra, or rather to the Vau i Dejës, and using the great quantities of water thus pounded to operate five hydroelectric stations. The Enver Hoxha power station is the third, and the largest, of the five, having been built after the Vau i Dejës station and the Light of the Party station at Fierza.

Returning to the Shkodra road, we find ourselves in an alluvial zone in which the river, or rather its various arms and tributaries, continually cross and recross the road and railway for no apparent season.

To the left of the road is the village of **Mjeda,** place of origin of the family of the poet Ndre Mjeda. Within the territory of the village are the **ruins of the citadel of Vig,** built in the 4th century A.D. to protect the road from Lezha to Priština. The road then runs through **Juban,** birthplace of the *rilindas* Zef Jubani, **Mazreku,** the site of an important Illyrian citadel, and **Guri i Zi** ("Black Stone"), named after a monolith standing in the centre of the village.

After a side road which runs into the road to the frontier post of *Hani i Hotit* on the Yugoslav border the main road comes to **Shkodra,** entering the town on a wide shady boulevard. Marshy meadows flanking the road point to the proximity of Lake Shkodra. On the right is a public garden, on the site of the old bazaar.

A bridge over the Buna, on the left, carries the road to Shiroka, affording beautiful views of **Lake Shkodra** on the right. With an area of 368 sq. km the lake, which is partly in Albania and partly in Yugoslavia, is the largest in the Balkans, beating Lake Ohrid by a short head. Its greatest depth is 44 m, but for the most part it is no more than 10 m deep. Frequently marshy, it is well stocked with fish. Its principal tributary is the Moraca, which flows into the northern part of the lake after passing through Titograd. It is also fed by underground springs, the largest of which is the *Syri i sheganit* ("Eye of the Chestnut Horse"). Its only outlet is the river Buna.

D. Shkodra

Shkodra (Italian *Scutari*), is one of Albania's principal cities and the economic and cultural capital of the northern part of the country. It is a very ancient town. Founded by the Labeates, it soon fell into the hands of another Illyrian tribe, the Ardiaeans, who made it their capital. Their last king, Gentius, having been brought into the conflict with Rome by Perseus, king of Macedon, was defeated and taken captive by the Roman general Paullus Aemilius under the walls of the town (168 B.C.), and the capture of the capital led to the immediate submission of the whole of Illyria. Byzantine rule was followed by a period of Slav occupation from about 1040 to 1355 and then by Venetian occupation in 1396. The town withstood several Turkish attacks but was given up by the Venetians in 1479.

In the 18th century Shkodra enjoyed a period of prosperity and became the seat of a local feudal family, the Bushatlis, who tried to make themselves independent of the Ottoman empire but were compelled to submit in 1831. The town's economic development reached its peak in 1870, when Skodra had up to 70,000 inhabitants, including 3500 merchants. This economic activity had social repercussions, and it was at Shkodra that the first strike in the history of the Albanian labour movement took place in 1901 and that Labour Day (1 May) was celebrated for the first time in 1905.

During the Balkan wars the town held out for seven months against a siege by Serbs and Montenegrins, who gained possession of it by treachery in 1913 but were immediately compelled to hand over their conquest to an international commission, which

governed the town until the outbreak of war in 1914. During the war Shkodra was briefly reoccupied by the Montenegrins but was then occupied by the Austrians. In 1920 the Austrians were replaced by the French, and the town was not incorporated into the new Albanian state until 1920.

Shkodra has very ancient cultural traditions. The first printing press in the country was set up here in the 16th century. In the 19th century the Jesuits and Franciscans, who enjoyed the patronage of the Vatican and Austria-Hungary, opened schools which attracted large numbers of pupils. Shkodra was the scene of Albania's first theatrical performances (perhaps under the influence of the Jesuits, in whose system of education the theatre played a part); and here too was established in 1877 the country's first musical society, building on the local custom of including in any social occasion a musical performance involving popular instruments like the *çifteli*, a kind of two-stringed guitar used to accompany songs (not to be confused with the *lahuta*, the single-stringed instrument which accompanied epic lays).

In general the arts were always in favour in Shkodra. The best representative of this is Kolë Idromeno (1860-1939), a painter, theatrical producer, architect and photographer who introduced the cinema to Albania in 1912.

The greatest photographers in Shkodra were the Marubi family, who within a century amassed a collection of 150,000 negatives of great historical value, now the property of the state, but it was Idromeno who was responsible, as architect, for most of the handsome business premises (with the shop on the ground floor and living quarters above it) to be

seen in the town centre. It was, however, a French architect who built at the end of the 19th century the offices of the vilayet, now the seat of the executive committee of the People's Council. There are numerous museums in the town, most of which have the additional interest that they are usually in old houses and give some idea of life in old Shkodra. The following are the most important:

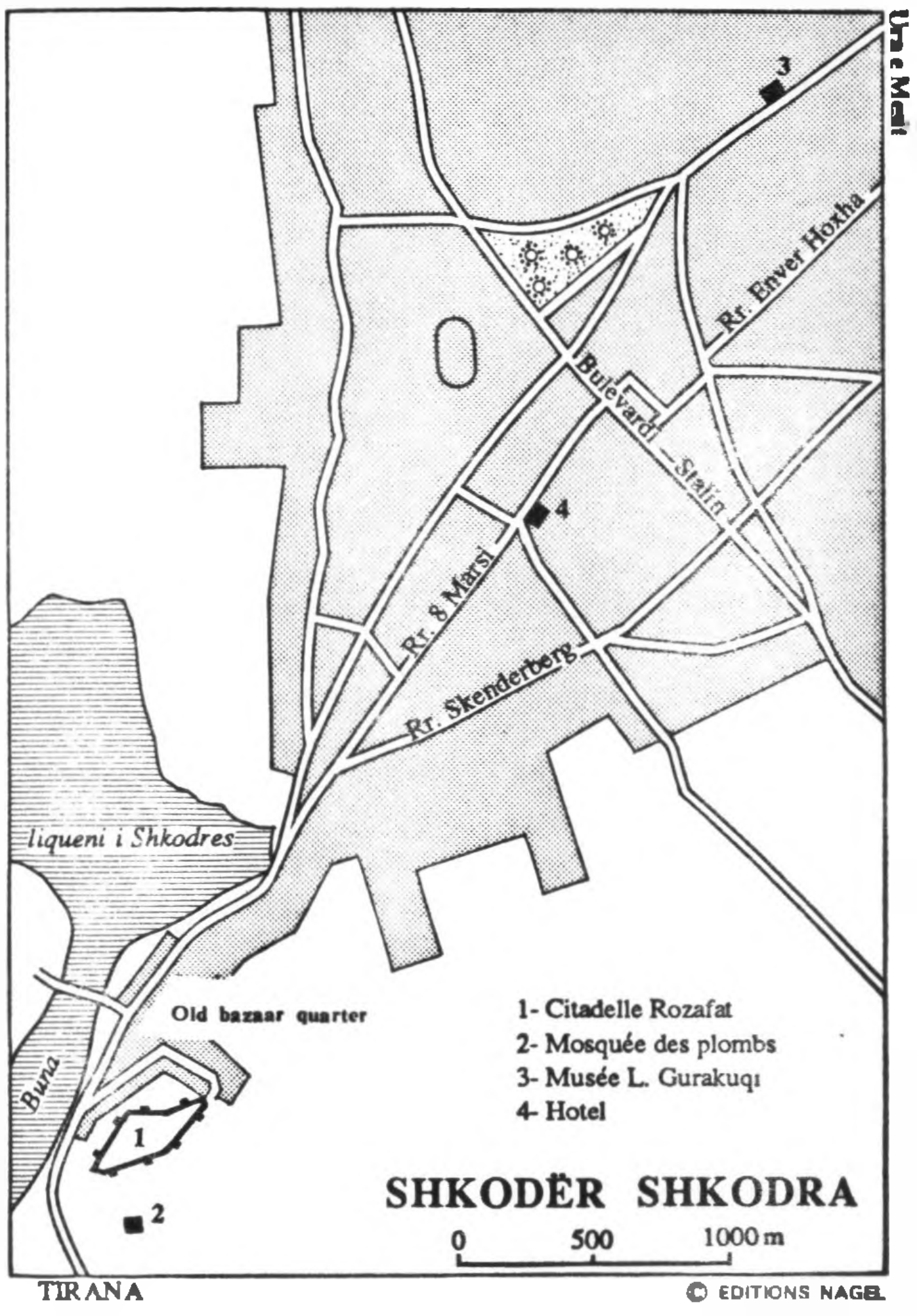
— **Sthëpia-muze e qarkorit të partisë për Shkodrën** (House-Museum of the Shkodra Section of the Party), opened in 1984 in the modest house in which a meeting setting up a regional section of the Party was held in 1942, only a week after the foundation of the Party in Tirana.

— **Shtëpia-muze e tre herojve** (House-Museum of the Three Heroes), the house of the painter Jordan Misja, who was wounded, taken prisoner and hanged by the occupying forces after a heroic resistance, along with two comrades, against several hundred of the enemy. A model and photographs show what the house was like after the affair, indicating that its restoration involved almost complete rebuilding.

— **Shtëpia-muze e degës sëtidhjes shqiptare të Prizrenit** (House-Museum of the Branch of the Albanian League of Prizren), opened in 1978 in the birthplace of Pasco Wassa (1825-92), a writer and high official of the Ottoman empire but above all an Albanian patriot, who played a major part in the resistance to the decisions of the Congress of Berlin.

SKODRA

1 Rozafat citadel
2 Lead Mosque
3 Gurakuqi Museum
4 Hotel


Rr. Enver Hoxha
Bulevardi Stalin
Rr. 8 Marsi
Rr. Skenderberg
Liqeni i Shkodres
Old bazaar quarter
Buna
1- Citadelle Rozafat
2- Mosquée des plombs
3- Musée L. Gurakuqi
4- Hotel
SHKODËR SHKODRA
0 500 1000 m
TIRANA
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Two rooms are devoted to the activity of the League and one to Pasco Wassa himself. There is a handsome well in the courtyard of the house, which is typical of the aristocratic houses of Scutari. Part of the house is still occupied by a relative of Pasco Wassa.

—**Shtëpia-muze e Luigj Gurakuqit** (House-Museum of Luigj Gurakuqi), opened in 1964. Luigj Gurakuqi (1879-1925), a poet and democratic politician, was assassinated by agents of King Zog. The house (*dhoma e miqve* or reception room, bedroom, kitchen) is well furnished in a style which points to a more westernised way of life than in Pasco Wassa's house.

— **Shtëpia-muze e Migjenit** (Migjeni House Museum). This is not actually the house in which the poet was born, which opened off the same courtyard but was destroyed to facilitate access to the adjoining Franciscan church (still standing, but now used as a store). The house, which is not yet completely organised as a museum, contains manuscripts, editions and translations of Migjeni's work and various personal mementoes.

— **Muzeu ateits** (Museum of Atheism). Founded in 1967, this museum is mainly anti-Catholic, but is to be reorganised with a more general scope. It contains two pictures by Kolë Idromeno representing with great realism the road to hell and the road to paradise.

— **Muzeu popullor** (Folk Museum), situated opposite the tourist hotel, near the square in which are the Migjeni Theatre and the Monument to the Heroes of Vig (who are honoured for an exploit in the village of Vig, in the Mirditë district, similar to that of Jordan Misja and his two comrades). The house, built by a wealthy merchant family in the mid 19th cen-

tury, was occupied for many years by an English nobleman who tried, without success, to introduce Protestantism in Shkodra. For this purpose he built a hall next to his house to serve as a church, equipping it with a belfry in the form of a minaret, to which a clock, known to the people of Shkodra as the "Englishman's clock" (as indeed the house is still called the "Englishman's house"), was later added. The clock did not go very well, giving rise to a local saying, *C'po punon sahati i inglezit si mulliri i Hajda Agës* ("The Englishman's clock goes like Hajda Aga's mill" —Hajda Aga being a miller suspected of cheating his customers). However this may be, the "Englishman's house" is the handsomest house in Shkodra. Note particularly the *dhoma e miqve* (reception room), with wood-carving of a quality worthy of an iconostasis and a finely carved *tavan* (ceiling). The museum displays beautiful regional costumes, fabrics and filigree-decorated objects. The paintings by Kolë Idromeno and his fellow-citizens and pupils Ndoc Martini and Simon Rrota are mainly of ethnographic interest. In the small garden attached to the house are capitals and other carved stones of the Venetian and Turkish periods.

Enver Hoxha Street, which has been completely restored, is worth a special visit. The main feature of interest is an exhibition of the material culture of the people of Shkodra, in a large ground-floor room. It includes objects in wood, straw, reeds and cane (this last being an industry which provides employment for 7000 people in the region), costumes, filigree jewellery, old weapons, embroidery, fabrics, etc. The rest of the street consists of shops, a café and restaurant of traditional type, craft workshops and a branch of the State Bank. Other shops display a

selection, changed every five years, of objects from all over Albania—the object, here as elsewhere, being to stress the survival of traditional motifs in modern products.

Shkodra's **Rozafat citadel,** perched in an ideal strategic situation on a rocky hill 133 m high between the rivers Buna and Kir, is of course the first monument to catch the eye of visitors approaching the town. It is approached by a road which is steep but negotiable by cars. The walls, defended by eight towers, have a total length of 600 m and enclose a roughly oval area of almost 9 hectares. Entered by a vaulted passage, angled to facilitate defence, the citadel consists of three parts. The first courtyard seems never to have contained any buildings, but excavation has brought to light evidence of Bronze Age occupation—earlier than the Illyrian period, from which parts of the wall bases appear to date. The second part of the citadel contains substantial remains of domestic and ancillary buildings and of **St Stephen's Cathedral,** a church in Dalmatian style built in the 13th and 14th centuries and later converted into a mosque (the minaret of which survives in part). The third part, the highest and the smallest, contains what was apparently a prison or powder magazine, cisterns and a large Venetian building which was the residence of the pashas of Shkodra until the 19th century. There are plans to establish a café in the house. Visitors are also shown the entrance to a secret passage leading down to the foot of the citadel.

Strategically situated as it was, the citadel retained its military importance from the 2nd century B.C. to the Balkan wars. It could be taken only by being starved out, as it was when finally captured by the

Turks after a heroic defence (immortalised by Paul Veronese's frescoes in the Doge's Palace in Venice).

Associated with the citadel is the legend of the walled up woman—a legend found all over the Balkans. The story goes that three brothers who were employed in the building of the fortress found that the work they had done during the day was always destroyed during the night. An old man who happened to be passing advised them to immure someone alive in the foundations in order to conciliate the infernal powers who were opposed to their enterprise. They decided, therefore, to sacrifice whichever of their wives was the first to bring them their meal on the following day, and promised to say nothing about their intentions. But the two elder brothers did tell their wives, so that only the wife of the youngest, Rozafa, turned up with her husband's meal. While she was being immured she asked only one boon —that an opening should be left in the wall so that she could continue to suckle her child. Thereafter the calcareous exudations from the stones in the fortress gateway were said to be Rozafa's milk, and were credited with the power to restore the supply of milk in mothers whose milk had dried up.

At the foot of the citadel, in the old tanners' quarter near the Drin, is the **Lead Mosque** *Xhamija e plumbit*, which is also known as the **Mosque of Mehmet Pasha,** after the vizier of Shkodra—although in fact it was built in 1773-74 by his son and successor, Mustafa. It owes its name to the material used in its roof. The mosque, aligned from north to south, consists of three parts: a mihrab in the form of a quarter circle; a 9 metre square prayer hall roofed by a dome borne on a drum, with open porticoes at the east

and west ends, the latter belonging to a minaret which is now truncated; and a portico surrounded by elegant monolithic columns with carved capitals and roofed by small domes. The interior is of interest for its frescoes and grille-covered windows.

The **surroundings of Shkodra** offer a variety of excursions.

The road to Titograd via Hani i Hotit (34 km) runs over a plain planted with tobacco and vines. In 18 km it comes to **Koplik** (ancient *Cinna*), from which a road runs north-east for 74 km, through beautiful scenery, to **Theth,** the principal holiday centre in the Albanian Alps.

6 km along this road, on the left, can be seen the remains of the **citadel of Marshej,** established by an Illyrian tribe, the Labeates, in the 7th century B.C. From the bridge at Zhaje (7 km) there is a view of the canyon of the *Përroi i thatë* ("Dry Stream"), 20 m deep and only 2 m wide. The road then climbs to the Thore pass (1630 m), from which there are superb views, and runs down the upper valley of the Shala to Theth, situated in a lush green valley watered by mountain streams and dominated by high peaks (many of them over 2500 m) whose slopes are covered with beech and pine forests. The prospect of the hills is particularly fine at sunset.

Another interesting trip is to the bridge at **Mes,** a few kilometres from Shkodra. The road leaving the town is lined by factories, notable among them (on right) the timber-working combine *(kombinati për përpurimin e drurit)*. It then enters the Postriba region, consisting of the valley of the Kir and the two mountain massifs to be seen straight ahead, Mt Maranaj to the left and Mt Cukal to the right.

After the village of Mes the modern bridge crosses the river to the right of the old 18th century bridge, over 100 m long, borne on thirteen graceful arches. The main arch, 12 m high, has a span of 21.5 m. The road leads to the village of **Drisht,** which was the seat of a bishopric within the archdiocese of Tivar from the 11th century to the Turkish conquest. There are still imposing remains of the **citadel,** but the town has shrunk into a hamlet noted for the quality of its cabbages and onions.

E. Return to Tirana via Durrës

Leaving Shkodra on the Tirana road, we see on the right, after the side road to Rozafat, a bridge leading to **Shiroka,** a small fishing village which is now a modern seaside resort, dominated by a villa which belonged to King Zog, now a holiday home. The road then runs past a small green island from which extends a fish barrier many centuries old and enters a tract of open country, with the plain of the Drin *(Bregu i Drinit)* to the left and the plain of the Zadrima *(Fusha e Zadrimës)* to the right. The Zadrima plain is traversed by the Old Drin *(Drini i vjetër)*, so called to distinguish it from the main branch of the river which flows towards Shkodra.

The road, accompanied by the railway, then crosses the Buna and comes to the village of **Bahçallëk,** situated at the junction of the Drin and the Kir. The village was completely destroyed by an earthquake (7.2 on the Richter scale) on 15 April 1979 but was rebuilt within six months, thanks to a tremendous mobilisation of effort by the whole country. The Shkodra region is particularly liable to earth-

quakes, which indeed are a potential hazard throughout Albania.

At the village of **Bërdica,** where the *rilindas* Pasco Wassa owned a *çiflik* (farm), we take a road on the right which runs over a marshy plain, the greater part of it now drained and occupied by the maize plantations of the Dajc cooperative.

To the right of the road, before the village of Dajc, is the village of **Oblikë,** within whose territory is the hamlet of **Shirq.** Here in the Middle Ages there was a powerful monastery with a church dedicated to SS. Sergius and Bacchus. Of this church, which was a fine example of late 13th century architecture, flooding by the river Buna and earthquakes have left only a few ruins.

After climbing one of the bare stony hills scattered about the plain the road arrives at the village and bathing station of **Velipoja,** where it comes to an end.

The main road continues from Bërdica to the village of **Bushat,** seat of the great feudal family, the Bushatlis, who for three-quarters of a century, from 1750 to 1831, pursued a semi-independent policy in the pashalik of Shkodra and northern Albania under Mehmet Pasha and Mustafa Pasha.

The road runs along the west side of a range of hills, the *Mal i Barbullush*, with pleasant views to the right of the plain, closed in the distance by a parallel range, the *Mal i Rrenc* (545 m), which lies between the plain and the sea.

Just before **Lezha** we turn right into the road to **Shëngjin,** known in antiquity as *Nimfeum* and later as *San Giovanni e Medua.*

After crossing the Drin and passing on the left a paper-mill, the largest in Albania, the road bears right under the west side of the Mal i Rrenc range and comes to a beautiful sandy beach, on left, with the houses of Shëngjin to the right. The harbour, now used only by fishing boats and coastal shipping, lies beyond the town, off the road to the left.

The attraction of the site is that it is well sheltered from both south winds (*shirokë*, the sirocco) and winds from the north-east (*bora*, i.e. "snow"). Before the war the place was almost deserted, with little beyond a landing stage and a customs post. It has still only 1500 inhabitants, but it has promising prospects as a holiday resort.

We now return to **Lezha** (pop. 8000), known to the Romans as *Lissus* and to the Venetians as *Alessio*, which is one of the oldest towns in the country. According to Diodorus Siculus it was founded by Dionysius the Elder, tyrant of Syracuse, in 385 B.C.; but recent discoveries have revealed the existence of an earlier Illyrian settlement. It was occupied in 213 by Philip V of Macedon and in 168 by Rome. Thereafter it grew considerably in size, and played an active part during the struggle between Caesar and Pompey. In ancient times the town consisted of three parts, separately fortified: the acropolis, the upper town on Ascension Hill *(Kodra e Shelbuemit)* and a lower district on the Drin. There are still considerable remains, particularly on the acropolis, of the town walls, which were renovated or rebuilt in Byzantine, Venetian and Turkish times.

It was at Lezha, a Venetian possession since 1398, that the meeting was held in 1444 that led to the formation of the Albanian League, on the instigation

and under the leadership of Skanderbeg, to organise the struggle against the Turks; and it was here that Skanderbeg died on 17 January 1468 and was buried in **St Nicholas's Cathedral.** After the Turks took the town in 1578 they violated his tomb, shared out his bones to make amulets and turned the cathedral into a mosque. This is now a Skanderbeg memorial, but little remains of the original building, which, after earlier vicissitudes, was badly damaged in the earthquake which devastated the whole town on 15 April 1979. The catastrophe is commemorated by a small **museum** and an **obelisk** celebrating the completion of the rebuilding.

A pleasant little road to the right runs down beside the Drin, much reduced in size since 1854, when after heavy flooding much of its water was diverted into the Buna. The Drin ends in a delta, near which is the little sandy island of **Kune,** now a nature reserve. The road ends at the village of **Ishull Lezhë,** where Skanderbeg's grandson landed in 1501 in a final attempt to wrest his inheritance from the Turks. This marshy region is rich in game, and a hunting lodge was built here by Count Ciano; it is now a **hotel,** a pleasant place for a restful holiday.

The main road skirts the *Malësia e Lezhës* (Mountain of Lezha), with fine views over the plain, formerly marshy but now well cultivated though of no great scenic beauty, of *Bregu i Matit* ("Banks of the Mat"), named after the river of that name. It runs through the villages of **Tresh, Gajush** and **Zejmen,** occupied by families from the *Malësi e madhe* (the mountains to the north of the Drin): hence the local costumes which some women can still be seen wearing.

After passing a road on the left to Rrëshen we cross the river Mat on a bridge, 473 m long, whose construction was much acclaimed by flatterers of King Zog. It may have been built not so much as to provide a link between Tirana and Shkodra as to make it easier to keep a watch on the Mirditë district, which always cherished dreams of independence: certainly it was constructed soon after the proclamation of the short-lived "Republic of Mirditë" in 1921.

We now turn left into the Burrel road to see the **artificial lake of Ulëz** (240 million cubic metres), formed to supply the *Karl Marx hydroelectric station* (25,000 kW of installed capacity, average annual output 120 million kWh). The road follows the river Mat and soon comes to its junction with the Fan, the river (a mountain stream) of the Mirditë region. Crossing a bridge to the other bank of the river, we enter a gorge in which, perched in a setting of extraordinary picturesqueness, is the village of **Shkopet,** with the remains of **two Illyrian citadels.** Soon after this we come to the 50 m high dam of the *Friedrich Engels power station.* The road tunnels through a rock barrier which was previously bypassed by a passage cut through the rock, now abandoned. The road to Ulëz goes to the left. Near the village is an attractive viewpoint overlooking the lake. From here we retrace our steps.

Continuing on the Tirana road, we come to the little town of **Milot** and then the industrial centre of **Laç.** To the right of the road are plants for the processing of copper ore and the manufacture of superphosphates. The town also has a timber-processing factory and a cellulose factory. The

road continues to **Mamurras,** a large village in the centre of a plain formerly consisting of marshland and forests but now well drained and covered with fields, orchards and vineyards, the produce of which is made into wine and raki in Milot. Before the war Mamurras had sawmills belonging to an Italian firm, Inag, which supplied timber to the seaside resort of **Patok**—now, for lack of adequate facilities, frequented only by local people.

The next place of any consequence on the Tirana road is **Fushë-Kruja** (see p. 159), where we turn right into the Durrës road. We cross the Black River *(Lumi i Zezës)* and enter the Ishëm valley, where the road rejoins the railway, which for some time has been running at a distance from the road. After the Tërkuza bridge a road goes off on the left to **Rinas airport.** We then cross the river Tirana *(Lumi i Tiranës)*, passing (on right) the village of **Preza,** with the ruins of its **medieval castle** clearly visible from the road.

We now come to **Vora,** where the road to Tirana via Kashar goes off on the left. Continuing straight ahead, we come to **Maminas** and (on right) the *Sukth state farm*, one of the largest in the country, with an area of 5000 hectares.

A road on the right leads to the village of **Ishëm,** the Roman *Pistum*, situated near the river of that name. It preserves considerable remains of its past on Cape Rodon *(Kepi i Rodonit)*, notably of the fortified harbour built by Skanderbeg. Beautiful views of the sea. There are also the ruins of a 15th century church and a citadel of the same period.

The main road crosses the river Erzen, goes over the low Rrashbull pass and after crossing the railway comes to Durrës. The town and harbour are straight ahead, the hotels and bathing beaches to the left.

F. Durrës

Durrës, known to the Italians as *Durazzo*, is Albania's second largest city, with a population of 75,000. It is one of the oldest towns in Europe, since according to Thucydides it was founded in 627 B.C., under the name of *Epidamnos*, by settlers from Cercyra (Corfu), which itself was a colony of Corinth. In 435 disagreements between the colony and the mother city led Corinth to besiege the town—unsuccessfully—and this was one of the causes of the Peloponnesian War. In 229 B.C. it was compelled to become a dependency of Rome, and this control became even tighter after 168, when the whole of Illyria fell under the Roman yoke. Now known as *Dyrrachium*, the town became the scene, in 48 B.C., of the first act in the struggle between Caesar and Pompey. The Roman period was a time of great prosperity, both economically and intellectually. Durrës was linked by road with *Apollonia* (Pojan) on the coast and *Ulpiana* (Priština) in the interior, and was one of the starting points of the celebrated *Via Egnatia* which ran across the Balkans to Constantinople. This prosperity survived an earthquake in 345 A.D., as, after it became part of the Eastern Empire in 395, it survived the destruction wrought by the barbarians, and in particular the sack of the town by Theodoric's Ostrogoths in 478. The Emperor Anastasius I (491-518), a native of Durrës, built a triple circuit of walls. In the words of Alain Ducellier, the town was "an

essential element in the Byzantine defensive system in the west". In the 9th century it became the chief town of a "theme" and the see of an archbishop. It fell into the hands of the Bulgars from 989 to 1005 and of Robert Guiscard's Normans in 1081, after the defeat of the Emperor Alexius I Comnenus under the walls of the town. The Normans set fire to it in 1185 and the Crusaders captured it in 1204. It then passed to Venice, back to the Byzantine empire and then to the Hohenstaufens. In 1267 Charles of Anjou made it the base for his operations in Albania and rebuilt its walls after an earthquake in 1273. It was as a result of this Angevin presence that Durrës gave its name, in the French form Duras, to a bastide in the Agenais, in south-western France.

In the 14th century the town was one of the largest in the country, with a population of 25,000. It then passed from the Serbian king Stephen Dušan to a great Albanian feudal lord, Charles Thopia, who, unable to defend it against the Turks, ceded it in 1392 to the republic of Venice, which was compelled to yield it to the Turks in 1501. The town then suffered a long period of decline, until at the end of the 18th century it had only some 200 houses. It began to revive only in the second half of the 19th century, when new economic activity was stimulated by exter-

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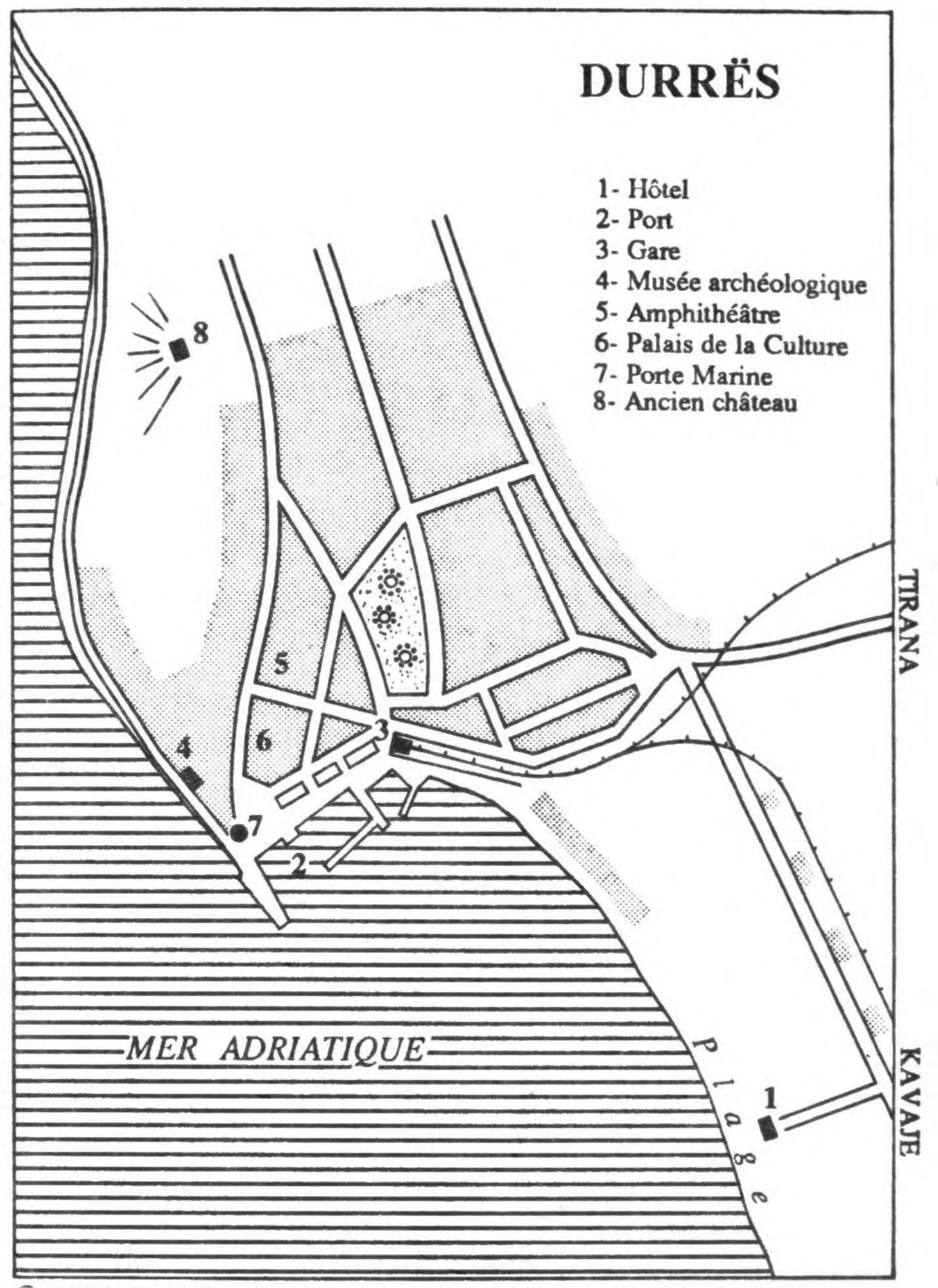
DURRËS

1 Hotel
2 Harbour
3 Railway station
4 Archaeological Museum
5 Amphitheatre
6 Palace of Culture
7 Marine Gate
8 Castle



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nal influences. Durrës enjoyed a brief period of glory in 1914, when it was designated as capital of Albania by the ruler selected for Albania by the great powers, Prince William of Wied; but William was swept off the throne within six months by the outbreak of the first world war and a peasant revolt. Although the town acquired a modern (though small) harbour in 1928, it was only after the second world war that its real economic revival began. The **port,** which since 1985 has borne the name of *Enver Hoxha*, is the largest in Albania. With 1750 m of quays and a depth of almost 10 m, it can handle vessels of 25,000 tonnes. In addition, thanks to the magnificent beaches to the south of the town, Durrës has become the country's principal holiday resort and the one which attracts most foreign visitors.

Durrës is also the principal centre of cigarette production in Albania, with the *Telat Noga* factory, successor to the *Stamles* company which before the Liberation had a monopoly in the manufacture of cigarette paper and matches. There are also factories producing rubber and radio and television sets.

With such a long and eventful history behind it, Durrës could be expected to preserve many traces of its past. Unfortunately it has suffered all kinds of disasters in the course of its history—it has been estimated that since the year 1000 it has changed masters 33 times—and nature has completed the destruction wrought by man, notably by earthquakes in 1905 and 1926. Moreover archaeological investigation is hampered by the fact that the same site has been occupied for 2000 years. Thus because of later building on the site it has not yet been possible to complete the excavation of the **amphitheatre**; the

work done so far has revealed its great size (it is the largest in the Balkans) and the fine quality of the construction. Built in the early 2nd century against a rocky hill at the west end of the Roman town, it is elliptical in form, with a maximum diameter of 136 m, and could seat up to 15,000 spectators. It was carefully designed to facilitate entrance and exit, with passages leading to three concentric galleries.

The amphitheatre seems to have been abandoned about the 5th century, but at some later stage a small **chapel** was inserted in one of the galleries, the existing walls being refaced with a mixture of stone and brick, in a primitive technique which has been dated to the 9th century. In front of the chapel, which still contains a stone altar, is a well. In the apse is a small double window framed in brick, and above it are some traces of frescoes. The main interest of the chapel, however, lies in the **mosaics** on the south and west walls.

The mosaic on the west wall, to the rear, is in a poor state of preservation. It depicts a central figure (now represented only by the bottom of his garment) flanked by two archangels, one of whom has practically disappeared, and figures of SS. Irene and Sophia (personifying Peace and Wisdom) and two donors, represented on a smaller scale. The mosaics on the south wall, much better preserved, comprise a figure of St Stephen, to whom the chapel was probably dedicated, and a group depicting a central figure flanked by two archangels and two small figures of donors. According to some authorities the central figure is the Emperor Alexander (912-

913); according to others a Virgin Angeloktistos, which they would date to the 6th or 7th century.

The amphitheatre is by far the most interesting ancient monument in Durrës, but there are also some remains of the town walls, the oldest surviving parts of which, dating from the time of the Emperor Anastasius I (491-518), who was a native of the town, can be seen here and there amid the rubble walls built by the Turks immediately after their capture of the town. The well preserved corner bastion, round and squat in form, had been built a few years previously by the Venetians.

Nearby is the **Rinia (Youth) Palace of Culture,** housed in the principal mosque, which recalls the part played by the young people of the town in the anti-religion campaign launched in 1967.

Not far away is the entrance to the *Enver Hoxha Harbour*, which was destroyed by the Germans in 1944 and has been rebuilt and enlarged several times since then. It is now Albania's largest port.

Also in this area, beautifully situated facing the sea, is the **Archaeological Museum,** set in a garden containing fragments of Greek and Roman sculpture and funerary monuments, etc., and also material of the Venetian and Turkish periods, notably arcading from the Kavaja mosque which has been re-erected here (apart from one arch now in the Korça museum).

In the vestibule of the museum are two excellent archaeological maps of the town and district. The room to the right contains objects of the prehistoric and Greek periods, particularly vases and coins; the one to the left is devoted to the Roman period, the Koman culture and the Byzantine period. The

museum is due to move to larger premises now under construction farther along the seafront.

The **Museum of the National Liberation Struggle** and the **museum-house of the Moisi family,** to which the great actor Alexander Moisi (1879-1935) belonged, are also worth a visit.

Going north along the coast from the Archaeological Museum, we come in 7 km to the remains of the *Porta Romana*, a stretch of brick walls pierced by a gateway flanked by towers, built, probably in the 6th century, as the town's outer defence.

The town's bathing beaches lie to the south of the town on the Kavaja road. These beaches of fine sand, between 150 and 180 m wide, extend for a distance of 4 kilometres, and run down into the sea in a very gentle slope, making them extremely safe. There are two small landing-stages, used by boats which run cruises round the bay; the fare for the cruise, which lasts about an hour, is 6 leks. The landing-stages, on which there are small cafés, also serve as diving boards for swimmers who like deep water.

The hotels on the seafront, which form an extensive complex of monumental aspect, offer high standards of comfort and amenity. The principal hotel is the *Adriatik*, which has excellent cuisine and a terrace with superb views of the harbour and the bay. It is flanked on the left (looking towards the sea) by the *Durrës* and *Apollonia* hotels, on the right by the *Kruja* and *Butrinti*. The first three of these are the ones usually patronised by foreign visitors.

The return to Tirana can be either by way of the Kavaja road and the road up the Erzen valley, passing

through the large village of **Vaqar** (the route followed at the end of the first itinerary), or by returning on the road which brought us to Durrës from Shkodra and turning right at Vora. At **Kashar** *Radio Tirana* can be seen on the left. When the transmitter was originally established in 1938 it had a power of only half a kilowatt; it now transmits 18 hours of programmes in Albanian every day, plus 82 hours a month in 20 foreign languages.

From Kashar the road runs in a straight line for almost 10 kilometres, lined by handsome trees, to return to **Tirana.**

Practical Information

ALBANIA

ENTRY TO ALBANIA

All visitors must have a valid passport (a British Visitor's Passport is not acceptable) and a visa. Application for a visa must be made to the nearest Albanian diplomatic mission; since Britain has no diplomatic relations with Albania, British visitors must apply to the Albanian embassy in Paris. This is best done through a travel agency—in practice usually through one of the firms running package tours to Albania, when the visa will be on a group basis.

Citizens of the United States and certain other nationalities are not permitted to enter Albania, and certain professions (e.g. journalists, government servants, members of the police and armed forces) may not be granted a visa.

On entering the country visitors are required to complete a declaration form listing money, valuables, books, etc., they are bringing in. A similar form has to be completed on leaving Albania, to enable the customs authorities to check that nothing has been disposed of in Albania and that no currency is being illicitly exported.

Books brought in by visitors will be checked and any undesirable matter confiscated: this applies particularly to political and religious literature (including the Bible).

No Albanian currency may be taken into or brought out of the country, and all foreign currency taken in must be declared. There is an exchange office at Tirana (Rinas) airport, and it is easy to change money in hotels. (There are also a few hard currency shops in hotels).

GETTING TO ALBANIA

There are no scheduled flights from the United Kingdom to Albania. Since the autumn of 1988, however, Tirana airport has been opened up to direct charter flights from London (Gatwick). In practice this means that visitors must travel as a group, under arrangements made by a travel operator.

The following firms at present run package tours from Britain to Albania:

Voyages Jules Verne, 10 Glentworth Street, London NW1 5PG; tel. 01-723 6556.

Regent Holidays, 13 Small Street, Bristol BS1 1DE; tel. 0272-211711.

Cox and Kings, St James Court, Buckingham Gate, London SW1E 6AF; tel. 01-931 9106/7 and 439 1629.

Swan Hellenic Art Treasure Tours, 77 New Oxford Street, London WC1A 1PP; tel. 01-831 1616.

There are direct flights to Tirana from France (Air France), Switzerland (Swissair), Germany (Lufthansa) and Yugoslavia (JAT, Yugoslav Airlines).

Tirana's Rinas Airport is 25 km from the capital.

VOCABULARY

The stressed syllable is indicated by an acute accent.

The fixed element in nouns is marked by an oblique stroke. Plurals are not given when in Albanian usage they are usually replaced by other turns of phrase. Forms are normally given in the order singular indefinite, singular definite, plural indefinite, plural definite.

For qualifying adjectives the masculine and feminine singular are given, with an indication whether or not they take the connective article.

Since there is no infinitive form of the verb in literary Albanian, the form given in the vocabulary is the first person of the present indicative active: i.e. *laj* means not "to wash" but "I wash".

Albania	Shqipëri, -a
Albanian	shqip, e
in Albanian	shqip
in English	anglísht
good morning, good day	mirëdíta
good evening	mirëmbréma
goodbye	mirupáfshim
thank you	falemindérit
your health!	gëzúar!
yes	po
no	jo
Mr	zotërí, -a (-nj, -njte)
Mrs	zónj/ë, -a (-a, -at)
Miss	zonjúsh ë, -ja (-a, -at)
child	fëmíj/ë, -a (—, -t)
girl	vájz/ë, -a (-a, -at)
boy	djál/ë, -i (djem, djemt)
woman	grúa, -ja (gra, gratë)
man	búrrë, -i (-a, -at)
son	bi/r, -ra (-j, -jt)
brother	vëll/á, -ai (-ézer, -ësërit)
sister	mót/er, -ra (-ra, -rat)
mother	nënë, -a (-a, -at)
father	át/ë, -i (-etër, -ëtërit)

When?	**Kur?**
time	kóh/ë, -a (-ë, -ët)
hour	ór/ë, -a (-ë, -ët)
minute	minút/ë, -a (-a, -at)
second	sekónd/ë, -a (-a, -at)
date	dát/ë, -a (-a, -at)
timetable	orár, -i (-e, -et)
today	sot
yesterday	dje
the day before yesterday	pardjé
tomorrow	nésër
the day after tomorrow	pasnésër
morning	mëngjés, -i (-e, -et)
afternoon	pasdít/ë, -ja (-e, -et)
this evening	sónte
this year	sirjét
midnight	mesnát/ë, -a
night	nátë, náta (net, nétet)
day	dít/ë, -a (-ë, -ët)
week	jáv/ë, -a (-ë, -ët)
Sunday	díel, -a (-e)
Monday	hën/ë, -a (-e)
Tuesday	márt/ë, -a (-e)
Wednesday	mërkúr/ë, -a (-e)
Thursday	énjt/ë, -ja (-e)
Friday	prémt/ë, -ja (-e)
Saturday	shtún/ë, -a (-e)
month	muáj, -i (-t)
January	janár, -i
February	shkurt, -i
March	mars, -i
April	prill, -i
May	maj, -i
June	qershór, -i
July	korrík, -u
August	gusht, -i
September	shtatór, -i
October	tétor, -i
November	nëntór, -i
December	dhjetór, -i
year	vit, -i (-e, -et *or* vjet, vjétët)
spring	pranvérë, -a
summer	vér/ë, -a (-a, -at)
autumn	vjésht/ë, -a (-a, -at)

winter	dim/ër, -ri (-ra, -rat)
now	taní
always	gjithmónë
never	kúrre
formerly	dikúr
late	vónë
Where *?*	**Ku** *?*
here	këtú
there	atjé
that way	andéj
in front of	pára
behind	prápa
straight ahead	drejt
to the right	djáthtas
to the left	májtas
near	áfër
far	larg
outside	jáshtë
beside	pránë
above	lart
below	póshtë
opposite	përbállë
everywhere	kudó
north	verí
south	jug
east	líndje
west	perëndím
Customs	**Dogan/ë, -a (-a, -at)**
frontier	kufí, -ri (-ju, -jt)
passport	pasapórt/ë, -a (-a, -at)
visa	víz/ë, -a (-a, -at)
declare	deklarój (deklaróra, deklarúar)
embassy	ambasád/ë, -a (-a, -at)
exchange	këmbím, -i (-e, -et)
change (*verb*)	këmbéj (këmbéra, këmbyer)
money	par/ë, -ja (-e, -et)
alcohol	alkool, -i (-e, -et)
Car, automobile	**Makin/ë, -a (-a, -at)**
direction	drejtím, -i (-e, -et)
bend	kthés/ë, -a (-a, -at)
junction, crossroads	kryqëzím, -i (-e, -et)

petrol	benzín/ë, -a
railway	kekurúdh/ë, -a (-a, -at)
ticket	bilét/ë, -a (-a, -at)
luggage	bagázh, -i (-e, -et)
boat	anij/e, -a (-e, -et)
aircraft	aeroplán, -i (-ë, -ët)
airport	aeropórt, -i (-e, -et)

Hotel	**Hotel, -i, (-e, -et)**
room	dhóm/ë, -a (-a, -at)
bed	krevát, -i (-e, -et)
ground floor	përdhes, -e
floor	kat, -i (-e, -et)
reception	prítj/e, -a (-e, -et)
key	kyç, -i (-e, -et)
wash-basin	lavaman, -i (-e, -et)
shower	dush, -i (-e, -et)
bath	bánj/ë, -a (-a, -at)
lavatory, toilet	nevojtór/e, -ja (-e, -et)
safe	árj/ë, -a (-a, -at)
lift	ashensór, -i (—, -t)
radio	rádio, -ja (-t)
radiator	radiatór, -i (-ë, -ët)
chambermaid	shërbyes/e, -ja (-e, -et)

Restaurant	**Restorant, -i (-, -et)**
eat	ha (hëngra, ngrën-)
drink (*verb*)	pi (píva, pírë)
drink (*noun*)	píj/ë, -a (-e, -et)
menu	menú, -ja (-të)
waiter	kameriér, -i (-ë, -ët)
waitress	kameriér/e, -ja (-e, -et)
food, dish	gjéll/ë, -a (-ë, -ët)
specialty	specialitét, -i (-e, -et)
bread, meal	búk/ë, -a (-ë, -ët)
breakfast	mëngjés, -i (-e, -et)
lunch	drék/ë, -a (-a, -at)
dinner	dárk/ë, -a (-a, -at)
European-style	allafránga
Oriental-style	allatúrka
cool	fréskët (i, e)
hot	ngróhtë (i, e)
litre	lít/ër, -ri (-ra, -rat)
pepper (pimento)	pipérk/ë, -a (-a, -at)

salt	krí**p**/ë, -a (-ëra, -ërat)
pepper	pipér, -i
oil	vaj, -i (-ra, -rat)
vinegar	úthull, -a
sugar	sheqér, -i
appetisers *(with drinks)*	méze, -je (-te)
butter	gjalpë, -i
cheese	djáth/ë, -i (-ëra, -ërat)
yoghurt	kos, -i
milk	qúmësht, -i
wine	vér/ë, -a (-a, -at)
water	újë, -i (-ëra, -ërat)
brandy	rakí, -a
ice	áku/ll, -lli (-j, -jt)
beer	árr/ë, -a (-a, -at)
tea	çaj, -i
coffee	káf/e, -ja (-e, -et)
liqueur	kilër, -i (-e, -et)
tobacco	duhán, -i
cigarette	cigár/e, -ja (-e, -et)
table	tavolín/ë, -a (-a, -at)
plate	pjá**t**/ë, -a (-a, -at)
fork	pirú/n, -ni (-nj, -njt)
knife	thík/ë, -a (-a, -at)
spoon	lúg/ë, -a (-ë, -ët)
glass	gót/ë, -a (-a, -at)
bottle	shíkh/e, -ja (-e, -et)
cup	filshán, -i

Post office	**Post/ë, -a (-a, -at)**
name	ém/ër, -ri (-ra, -rat)
address	adrés/ë, -a (-a, -at)
send	dërgój (dërgóra, dërgúar)
addressee	márrës, -i (-it)
sender	dërgrés, -i (-it)
letter	letër, -ra (-ra, -rat)
postcard	kartolín/ë, -a (-a, -at)

Feel ill	**Më dhemb**
ill	sëmuré (i, e)
illness	sëmundj/e, -a (-e, -et)
doctor	mjek, -u (-, -et)
chemist's shop	farmací, -a (-të)
prescription	recét/ë, -a (-a, -at)

medicine	iláç, -i (-e, -et)
ointment	melhém, -i (-e, -et)
syrup	shurúp, -i (-e, -et)
constipated	kaps (*invar.*)
diarrhoea	diarré, -ja
needle, injection	gjilpër/ë, -a (-a, -at)
influenza	grip, -i
wound, sore	plág/ë, -a (-a, -at)
hospital	spitál, -i (-e, -et)
intestines	zórr/ë, -a (-ë, -ët)
blood	gja/k, -ku (-qe, -qet)
tooth	dhëmb, -i (ë, -ët)
dentist	dentíst, -i (-ë, -ët)
buy	blej (bléra, blérë)
shop	dyqán, -i (-e, -et)
church	kísh/ë, -i (-e, -et)
monastery	manastír, -a (-a, -at)
abbey	abací, -a (-të)
capital	kryeqytét, -i (-e, -et)
quarter, district	lágj/e, -a (-e, -et)
village	fshat, -t (-ra, -rat)
citadel	kalá, -ja (-të)
fortress	fortésë, -a (-a, -at)
tower, keep	kúll/ë, -a (-a, -lt)
museum	muzé, -u (-te)
monument	monumént, -i (-e, -et)
festival	krye, kreú (krérë, krérët)
exhibition	ekspozít/ë, -a (-a, -at)
match	ndéshj/e, -a (-e, -et)
show, spectacle	pámi/e, -a (-e, -et)
newspaper	gazét/ë, -a (-a, -at)
closed	mbyllur (i, e)
sign	nënshkrúaj (nënshkróva, nënshkrúar)
pay	pagúaj (pagóva, pagúar)
cheap	lirë (i, e)
translate	përkthéj (përkthéve, përkthyer)
souvenir	kujtím, -i (-e, -et)
cold	ftóhtë (i, e)
hot	nxehtë (i, e)
mist	mjégull, -a (-a, -at)
snow	bór/ë, -a (-ëra, -ërat)
cloud	re, -ja (-ët)
rain	shi, -u (-ra, -rat)

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